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Encounter

JUNE-JULY 1982
VOL. LVIII No. 6
VOL. LIX No. 1

Edited by MELVIN J. LASKY *and* ANTHONY THWAITE

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Per copy: UK £1.30: USA & Canada $3.25. Back numbers £2.00 ($5.00). Postage/packing: 40p ($1.00).
Annual subscriptions: UK £15.75: USA & Canada $36.50 surface, $46.00 by air: Elsewhere £17.00.
Address for all departments: Encounter Ltd., 59 St Martin's Lane, London WC2N 4JS (01-836 4194).
US Mailing Agent: Expediters of the Printed Word Ltd., 527 Madison Avenue, Suite 1217, New York 10022.
Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. ©*1982 by Encounter Ltd. Binder for six copies £4.00 ($9.60).*
Manuscripts are returned only if accompanied by s.a.e. (English stamp) or International Reply Coupons.

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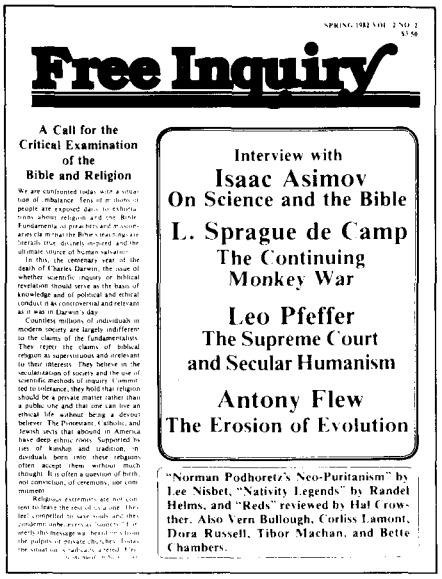
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John Rizkalla

A Poet in the Classroom

DURING THE Second World War M. Poulianoff escaped from Poland to Cairo. He stayed on, a bachelor, endeavouring to teach English in a French-speaking school run by the Christian Brothers. As one of the few members of staff with a degree in his subject, M. Poulianoff displayed a further peculiarity by producing for each issue of the school magazine, a poem in English.

One sweltering day in early June M. Poulianoff, having lost out in a dialogue with his class, punished the boys with a dictation. Though they hardly suspected it, the pupils were writing out the first lines of their teacher's recent day-dreaming.

I am Prince Tutmes, in the shade I lay
Of yon great rock and god, men call the
Sphinx,
To hunt the pard, the lion and the lynx. . . .

M. Poulianoff paused, watched, listened, ready to pounce on the slightest stirring of derision. There was none. His pupils, thirteen-year-olds of Arab and Jewish progeny, even if flavoured with a sprinkling of European hybrids, knew still less about good poetry than they did about correct English.

There was a knock on the glass-panelled door. M. Mattonini, the only other teacher who had a claim on English, hurried over on his one good leg to the blackboard. In a series of panted whisperings he brought news that the Headmaster wished to see M. Poulianoff in his office at once.

Brother Christian, besides being Head, was the only Frenchman in the school, and rather glad of it. He was short-sized, and cultivated a pointed trim beard, reminiscent of Cardinal Richelieu—a personage to whom Brother Christian prayed, in secret, for guidance.

"Regretfully I've had to withdraw your excellent contribution to the school magazine", Brother Christian announced in French, indicating a chair.

M. Poulianoff, who had been steeling himself for the past ten years against instant dismissal, let out a sigh of relief.

But then why the need to haul him out of a lesson? "Isn't the poem good enough?" he enquired.

"Too good." The Headmaster smiled, stroking his beard.

M. Poulianoff wondered how the man could be so sure. Brother Christian's knowledge of English was about as clear as the glimmering minds in the first year's intake.

"I don't understand", M. Poulianoff confessed.

"Don't you read *The Egyptian Gazette*?"

"Never."

"Luckily for you Brother Alfonso, your predecessor, now spends his waking hours digesting all the European papers. . . ." Brother Christian pulled out of a side-drawer a sheet of newspaper. "Here, take a look at this!"

M. Poulianoff slid on his reading glasses. "Thirty pounds, and publication in *The Egyptian Gazette* for first prize for any poem extolling the theme of Egyptian pride. The judge will be His Excellency Adel Gazzar Pacha."

M. Poulianoff stared in amazement. It was not because Adel Gazzar Pacha was a Minister in the King's cabinet, but far more important, as Brother Christian was quick to point out: "An old boy of this school, whose only son, Samir, you yourself are presently teaching English. . . . The conclusion was inescapable. . . ."

"Inescapable?"

"To submit your poem. The school wants you to win!"

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M. Poulianoff's heart beat hopefully. For years his poems in the school magazine had formed an island of English amid a sea of French prose. They were only published anyway at Brother Christian's insistence. Like the Latin volumes of theology in the boys' library, M. Poulianoff's works were intended to impress parents with the seriousness of the school.

"If you should win, your name will resound throughout the European community."

Even with the British Army still in residence in the country, it was not going to be big enough to establish a poet. But it would confirm the Order's teaching reputation.

"Now tell me something about Samir's progress?"

With luck, if the boy was not too promising to go elsewhere, he would worm his way up to the senior forms. In this country sons of ministers maintained the habit of succeeding in due course to their fathers.

"The boy is taking private lessons." M. Poulianoff decided to tell the worst.

"What for?"

"English. I give him a lesson each week at his villa on the Nile."

"You never told me."

Brother Christian made a rapid note on his pad. "You know, I take this as a criticism of the school's teaching", he accused M. Poulianoff.

"The boy is leaving next year to go to a public school in England."

"England?" The word tolled with the knell of permanent parting.

Brother Christian held on to his desk for support. His inability to speak prompted M. Poulianoff to remember his duty.

"My class . . . the boys will get riotous. . . ."

He might have been referring to orang-outangs screaming at the bars of their cages. Brother Christian waved the keeper away. He was drained of all energy. Somehow, without any permission, M. Poulianoff had taken it upon himself to remove one of the country's future prime ministers.

SAMIR WAS ENGROSSED IN an English précis on land reclamation in the Western Desert. It would safely keep him puzzled for the next twenty minutes while M. Poulianoff composed his poetry.

He intended to explore a first line that had tugged at his mind all night.

How shall I part from you,
Who stole me just to mock
With eyes and smile too sad,
And not die of slow decay?

Was it a girl? He could hardly recall those half-dozen faces that had once kept him from sleep. Or was it his country, torn and grieving Poland? Or maybe even God? He had not thirsted for any of these since his escape so long ago. M. Poulianoff stopped speculating. He did not like to be reminded that he was an exile.

The door opened with a sigh. A Nubian servant skimmed across a deck of Persian carpets. He entered, as if into a desert tent, bearing a glass of ice-cold lemonade on a silver tray.

The English master, as was his habit, directed his gaze first to the side plate on which would lie the white envelope containing his tuition fee. It was not there.

"The Pacha asks you to take tea with him", whispered the Nubian.

"Now?"

The servant was surprised that a Pacha's request could be satisfied in anything but the immediate.

Samir raised his head in hopeful expectation. M. Poulianoff gulped down his refreshment, while the Nubian stood waiting.

The bitter-sweet tang did nothing to quell M. Poulianoff's unease. He had never met Adel Gazzar Pacha. He had heard his steps pause outside the door, heard a cough hurrying down the corridor. The effect, not only on him, but on Samir also, was to make both stop working. So far, though, the chilling presence had always changed course, and refused to materialise.

M. Poulianoff stood up to dust his jacket and trousers. He said to Samir: "I must see your father. But you must carry on. . . ."

"Will you be long?" The boy's voice seemed to mock M. Poulianoff, but the English teacher was far too nervous to respond.

He fell into step with the Nubian. He was introduced into a damask-hushed salon. The air hummed with the smell of hidden flowers. M. Poulianoff sat on the edge of his armchair.

Moments later the door jerked open to let in the Pacha himself.

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M. Poulianoff stood to attention. The small, ponderous figure was checking the other end of the room, as if unable to locate the English teacher. The Pacha pulled out a handkerchief, and having given way to a bout of vigorous coughing, spat into it. The smell of still more hidden flowers reached out to M. Poulianoff. It was so strong that, unconsciously, he took a step back.

The Pacha jerked his head in M. Poulianoff's direction. "You don't need to stand up for me", he barked. "People keep doing that sort of thing to me all the time outside. In the end I can't tell the officials from the visitors."

He laughed at his own wit. But it was the English, the impeccable accent, that reduced M. Poulianoff to silence. It was so much better than his own.

"I want to know how my son is coming on", the Pacha indicated, stuffing his handkerchief back into his top pocket.

As he passed M. Poulianoff, his hand shot out and tilted the English teacher back down into the armchair. He himself slumped on a divan and, ignoring his own enquiry, remarked: "The boy is intelligent. His only fault is being lazy."

M. Poulianoff wanted to add that Samir was also impertinent, besides being a disruptive element in the class. But he sensed that the Pacha was not in the habit of having his opinion altered for him.

"I speak to Samir entirely in English nowadays", the Pacha confided in a loud voice. "You must have noticed the difference."

The stern eye permitted only a nod from M. Poulianoff.

Tea was served from a more decorative and heavier silver tray than the English teacher had been accustomed to. It was also a different Nubian, sleeker and still more self-effacing.

The Pacha observed after a first sip: "My son will be going to Oxford to my own old College."

M. Poulianoff's heart tightened with unexpected envy. He would have coveted just a single visit round the spired city.

"Would it not have been simpler to send Samir to an English school in the first place?" M. Poulianoff felt impelled to ask.

"The boy is only doing what I did, years ago", the Pacha snapped. "In fact he's a year late. I was twelve when I knew enough French to leave your school."

The Pacha leaned forward to wag his index finger playfully at the English master. "But I still qualify each year to receive the school magazine."

M. Poulianoff flushed at the thought that so eminent a man, a Minister in the King's cabinet, must have been reading his poetry for years.

"I hope you are strict on the boy. I'm all for discipline myself. I can't stand the weak."

THE MINISTER RECLINED on the divan, stretched out his arm to press a button on the wall. This had the effect of releasing the Nubian servant into the room. He approached M. Poulianoff with a plate. On it lay the familiar white envelope. The Pacha looked away as the English master disposed of the embarrassing object in his pocket.

Suddenly he stood up, obliging M. Poulianoff to do the same. His hand was extended, but as it was about to meet the other's, it drew away. The Pacha seemed to have recalled something.

"You do read *The Egyptian Gazette*?"

M. Poulianoff hated to lie, but he was saved from having to answer anyway.

"But of course you do. Then you will have read about the Poetry Competition?"

M. Poulianoff felt himself tingle with a pleasure that was quite indecent. How could he ever thank Brother Christian enough for what he had done?

"I'm sure a person of your ability reads a great deal of poetry", the Pacha said, as with a wave of the hand he indicated that M. Poulianoff had a choice of standing or sitting.

But M. Poulianoff knew instinctively when to stand.

"Well, in my work, I have to! I mean, it's my life . . .", enthused the English teacher.

"How fortunate you are to be a man with leisure!" the Pacha sighed.

He walked over to a desk topped with books and files.

"Any poetry in particular?"

"Mostly Keats and Shelley. Your son will tell you I read to the class every week a selection. . . ."

"Children of Samir's age are incpable of appreciating poetry. I'm sure you'd agree",

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the Pacha said.

"Maybe not the meaning, but surely the sound of beautiful words. And isn't that what true poetry is really about?"

M. Poulianoff stopped. Had he overstepped himself? Shown too much passion? Too much erudition? The Pacha was observing him with intense curiosity. Or was it a look of distaste? M. Poulianoff was always getting the two mixed up.

Silence had been imposed by the Pacha, and only he could break it. He did so by pointing an accusing finger at M. Poulianoff.

"Do I detect a lover of poetry?"

"Oh, certainly that and much more. . . ." M. Poulianoff's enthusiasm overcame his relief. In any case, he was certain he was beginning to discern in the Minister's words a pattern, a wooing.

"I write poetry myself", he admitted.

The Pacha let out an exclamation of delight. "Ah, I suspected as much. And you've published, of course?"

"In the school magazine. Each year. The last ten." M. Poulianoff risked jogging the Minister's memory. "You have probably read them. . . ."

But one glance at the Pacha's puzzled face sufficed to indicate that he had not, nor could he really be expected to.

"I hope to send my work to England."

"Oh, you write in English." The Pacha was visibly disappointed. "Not Polish?"

M. Poulianoff shook his head mournfully, then blurted out with passion: "Will there ever be a Poland again?"

But the Cabinet Minister, who had spoken extempore on poetry, recoiled from expressing an opinion on a subject he might have been expected to know something about.

Instead he demanded in a voice bristling with suspicion: "Am I to understand you have actually entered for this Poetry Competition?"

M. Poulianoff went red. "Well, yes, I have. But you know I have. . . . Brother Christian sent my entry to you."

The Pacha's face twitched with controlled anger.

"Did he?"

He turned to his desk to pick up a file. He opened it, and began to rummage through a jumble of odd-sized pieces of paper. In a matter of seconds, though, he lost all patience with the task.

"Quite impossible!" he muttered, then glared at M. Poulianoff. "You realise all this is quite improper."

"Improper?"

"To discuss these manuscripts."

The Minister tossed the file on the desk. "One thing, there are no more entries to come . . . thank God!" he let slip.

M. Poulianoff was baffled. Could the Minister be asking for sympathy? "Have you many poems to read?"

"Read?" The Minister seemed to be standing on his toes with indignation. "Do you imagine that a man in my position, responsible for a dozen government departments, each one with a hundred too many civil servants idling around, has time to read poetry?"

M. Poulianoff saw the overwhelming impossibility at once, and became thoroughly alarmed. "But I always assumed that as judge you would want to read. . . ."

"Award, M. Poulianoff. I award. Not read. Others read."

The English teacher struggled in vain to find an answer. Not that it mattered. The Minister expected silence to greet most of his observations.

NOW HE WAS POINTING a finger at M. Poulianoff. "I require somebody who can read English." He paused. "That is something you do all the time, I expect. Why can't you be my reader?"

M. Poulianoff knew at once why he couldn't. "Because I am a contributor too. . . ."

The Pacha dismissed the inconvenience with a wave of the hand. "I can read *that*!" he burst out. "It's the others. They're all here. All yours!"

The Minister picked up the file, and poked it at M. Poulianoff's chest. But the English teacher was unprepared, and the contents went flying in the air, scattering over the carpet.

"My God!" M. Poulianoff fell on his knees.

The Minister watched in silence as the English teacher used his fingers like suckers to retrieve the sheets of paper. "I'll take yours", the Minister ordered.

M. Poulianoff handed the top sheet over.

The Minister put on his reading glasses. He asked mechanically: "And the title is . . . ?"

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"The Dream of Prince Tutmes." M. Poulianoff pulled himself up on one knee.

" 'Prince Tutmes', do I know him?" The Minister began to fidget, trying to link the name with the Royal dynasty.

"Prince Tutmes saved the Sphinx from being swallowed up by the sands of the desert. In return the Sphinx made him Pharaoh. It's inscribed in the stone between the feet of the Sphinx. . . . I pointed it out to the boys on the last trip we made up there", M. Poulianoff explained enthusiastically.

The Minister grunted. His eyes focused at random on the sheet of typed paper. To satisfy M. Poulianoff he read aloud:

And thought I to myself: good fortune shuns
And cruel Destiny full often mars
The wight that is ill-favoured by the stars. . . .

"Wight?" The Minister repeated the word with incredulity. "Wight?"

"Man. Human being. *Homo Sapiens*. . . ." M. Poulianoff was on his feet now, eager to explain the whole dictionary, as required.

The Minister removed his reading glasses with deliberation. "Does the rest of your poem need a glossary?", he asked.

"I can provide one."

"No. It'll have to stand on its merits . . .", the Minister said quickly. "In the meantime if you will read the other entries, and then come up with, let's say. . ." He raised two, three fingers. "Yes, the best three."

"I'll write out my reasons", M. Poulianoff assured him.

The Minister smiled. His voice was suave as he explained further: "And, as a special favour for all you've done for my son. . . . Oh, yes, I do know. . . . I will judge those three poems of your choice, against yours!" He pressed M. Poulianoff's hand. "The winner should be obvious. . . ."

"Obvious", the English teacher approved.

"One week. No more. One week!", the Minister insisted.

M. Poulianoff, now hired, clasped the file to his chest. And, like the scores of other leather-elbowed and unmemorable clerks who scurried in the Minister's subterranean offices, he stepped back and bowed.

There had been no mention of an emolument. But then, talents as true as M. Poulianoff, the Minister knew from experience, did not ask for money. They were happy with just a ray of recognition.

Adel Gazzar Pacha rang for his servant. The Nubian appeared carrying M. Poulianoff's briefcase.

"Samir's lesson . . .", the English teacher remembered.

"No matter now!" The Minister was glancing at his wrist-watch.

"I'll make it up to Samir with an hour and a half next week", M. Poulianoff promised as he placed the file inside his briefcase.

Adel Gazzar Pacha made his point with his customary frankness. "No! Now you are my reader. There will be no more private lessons."

THE EXILE is an optimist. M. Poulianoff took his dismissal for a promotion. From private tutor he had become literary critic. True, he was a little disappointed by the number of entries. He had expected a hundred, or two. He had anticipated days, and particularly nights, of heart-searching decisions. In fact there were fourteen entries, and one evening would suffice to dispose of the lot.

Nevertheless M. Poulianoff propped the pink file up against a pile of tatty copy-books. He decided to wait a day or so. There was a vague hope inside him that Adel Gazzar Pacha might dispatch a messenger boy to run six floors and remit a consignment of late entries.

He waited five days. But with each wasted night, the file, pink with conceit, grew ever more threatening. Its radiance was eclipsing even the light bulb overhead. It revealed to the English teacher what he had long forgotten, that the furniture, the iron bed, the desk, the two cane chairs, his only cooking ring, all these accessories of his daily life were cheap, and vulgar.

In horror M. Poulianoff got down to his appointed task without further delay. He was quickly reassured, though.

The first entry was a joint effort from two soldiers stationed in Ismailia. M. Poulianoff read with disgust that the only pride they had discovered in the country lay between the thighs of a local whore. He turned with relief to a retired Englishwoman who wrote a hymn to the days of Lord Cromer, who had

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governed Egypt without a government. There was a Greek Cypriot who dreamt of Cleopatra, a Maltese who envied Caesar in Alexandria, a Frenchman who taught English at the Lycée and now harangued his reader for a statue to Napoleon. The Egyptian entries came from students who were waiting for a Revolution to rid themselves of all foreigners and their competitions. One, less hopeful than the others, begged Adel Gazzar Pacha in bold dithyrambic verse for a job as clerk.

A drop of sweat smeared the last copy. M. Poulianoff straightened up with a jolt. It had taken him just over half an hour to rush through the poems. The effort had left him without any sense of their individual merit. Now he realised he had not wanted to find any.

He stared at the manuscripts on his desk, and began to tremble with sudden excitement. Intuitively, he had guessed that so far as the Minister could care for such things, M. Poulianoff might just as well select the three worst entries.

WITH UNCHARACTERISTIC self-confidence M. Poulianoff jerked open the door to his classroom. He anticipated a swell of strident voices to greet him, as usual. This time there was silence.

M. Poulianoff was so unnerved, he nearly stepped back into the corridor to make sure he had come to the right classroom. But the faces watching him were all too familiar: spotty, mocking, ruthless.

The English teacher sought refuge with his desk, mounted on a stand and intended to give him authority. He checked his chair surreptitiously. Was there a leg missing? A nail on the seat? No. The surface of the desk, apart from the board duster, was bare. The threat, therefore, lay inside the desk. M. Poulianoff faced his class, determined in this period never to raise the lid.

He pulled out his book of English verse, and announced: "I propose to read Shelley this morning."

There was still no reaction. Comforted, M. Poulianoff decided to enlighten the boys' minds. His voice was warm, paternal. "Poetry is what makes us—truly human, raises us above ourselves. . . ."

The thirteen-year-olds fidgeted, smelling in the warm wind sliding through the open windows the approach and lust of summer holidays.

The English master declaimed, with eyes that invariably went moist:

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. . . ."

Giggling erupted at the back of the class. M. Poulianoff relaxed. The class was returning to normal. But when a wave of giggling broke out, drowning his voice, he was forced to parley.

"Who made that noise . . . those noises?", he corrected himself.

M. Poulianoff was hoping he would get no reply. But a solitary hand surfaced above the mass of curly black heads. It belonged to Samir Adel Gazzar.

M. Poulianoff blinked in dismay at his private pupil. Had the boy been pointing a revolver, he would have felt the same sense of shock, the same sense of betrayal.

"I can't accept such behaviour, you know that. . . ." The remark was intended to steer half-way between a threat and an appeal.

"I wasn't laughing. Was I?" Samir's face emerged to check on his upstretched hand.

M. Poulianoff pretended to find the posturing funny. "Yes, it is your hand. We all recognise it. . . ."

He was glad of the laughter he had provoked. But now other hands were shooting up. A chant was developing: "The blackboard! The blackboard!"

M. Poulianoff felt a cold sweat come over him. Too late he remembered now that he had not checked on the blackboard. There lay the demon!

"No!" M. Poulianoff stood by his desk. Like a captain at the helm, facing a mutinous crew, he flung out his arm, pointing to Samir, the obvious ringleader. "You will tell me what is on the board."

THE WORDS he had screamed were magic. There was a quietness and attentiveness in the class that he had never before obtained.

To his credit, Samir did hesitate.

"Read! Read!" M. Poulianoff was screaming across a hushed audience, and was aware

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of an unmistakable edge of hysteria in his voice.

Samir did not bother to look at the blackboard. He looked around, catching the eyes of the other boys.

How shall I part from you,
Who stole me first to mock
With eyes and smile too sad,
And not die of slow decay?

He stopped, out of breath. A voice piped up: "Please sir, is your poem about Samir?"

There was the beginning of a giggle, but it petered out. In that terrifying silence which his convulsed features had imposed on the assembly, M. Poulianoff did not take in the rows of mischievous eyes preying on him. He had seen as never before his own nakedness, his own pretentiousness.

He came slowly to life, and through a blur, distinguished Samir's face. "How did you get hold of it?" M. Poulianoff demanded.

But, of course, it had happened that day when he had gone off to talk to the Pacha, and had left the poem behind, along with his briefcase. "You stole it. Thief", he accused.

Samir began to shout back: "You aren't allowed to say such things to me. I'm the son of a Minister!"

"You are a rat. A rat, do you hear? And this is what I do to rats. . . ." Picking up not the piece of chalk he intended, but the board duster, M. Poulianoff hurled it across the room. The fibrous jute caught Samir on the cheek, and drew blood.

In the uproar that followed the English teacher bellowed: "Barbarians! All of you! Philistines! You deserve to stay in the dustbins into which Fate has dropped you!"

He stood before the class, towering in his rage. The man's hand was held high in the air, waving his copy of Shelley. He was like a standard-bearer, and the boys watched the birth of this leader in sudden silence.

"Without me, you will die in your dustbins! Yes, and if you think I am only the garbage collector, then just remember that it was I who lifted the lid, and tried to show you the sky. . . ."

Was it a deliberate gesture, or was it a miscalculation of the sweep of his arm that sent the copy of Shelley sailing out of the window?

No one knew, or stopped to wonder. For the next moment M. Poulianoff had grabbed hold of his briefcase, and marched out of the classroom, and then out of the school.

M. POULIANOFF was going straight to Adel Gazzar Pacha at his villa, at the Ministry, at the Palace! Hugging the briefcase containing the precious pink folder tightly to his chest, he made his plans. He would dump the folder on the Minister's desk, and tell him to carry on with the work he was supposed to do.

"Samir, no doubt learning from you", the words burbled inside M. Poulianoff's brain, ". . . thinks of me as another of your Nubian servants. Well, I have just taught your son his first lesson in egalitarianism!"

M. Poulianoff felt elated by what he had done. He was bold, and he could be rash. He tramped happily through the strangulated, sewer-strewn streets in this filthiest of all Cairo's medieval districts.

Too late he found his way blocked at the other end by an ugly crowd of men and women marching in his direction. Between them they were swinging somebody by the arms and legs. From all the shouting M. Poulianoff was quick to learn that a thief, a pickpocket, had been caught, knocked down, and beaten up. Now, unconscious, the man was being hauled to the nearest police station for punishment.

M. Poulianoff was granted a glimpse of the lolling head, covered in blood. He was so shocked, he protested in a loud voice. He went further, and tried to wrest the victim from his assailants. Only the fact that he was a European saved him from suffering quite the same fate. The crowd, like a child whose toy was about to be confiscated, reacted angrily. They hustled, and pushed M. Poulianoff against the wall. Insults were screamed into his face. A gang of urchins in rags jumped about in glee. In the mêlée the briefcase slipped out of his grip. M. Poulianoff missed his footing, and was sure he was about to be trampled upon.

But to his relief arms helped him to stagger up again. The crowd had moved on, in festive mood. M. Poulianoff pointed to the briefcase lying some metres away in the mud. One of the urchins, expecting a tip, rushed to pick it up for him. M. Poulianoff looked inside, then let out a gasp of horror.

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All the contents, particularly the pink folder, were gone. The urchin ran away with a clout on his head.

M. POULIANOFF BARRICADED himself in his apartment, behind locked doors and shutters. Only the windows were left open. He collapsed on his bed, fully dressed.

When next he awoke, in a sweat, dawn was just breaking. His head, his limbs, throbbed with pain. Images splintered on the surface of his brain: Samir's bleeding cheek, the pick-pocket's bloody face, the mob screaming for justice, the empty briefcase.

"I'm a runaway", he told himself. "I shall be arrested, and punished."

There would be a knock on the door, a policeman or two. No more, because he was not at all important. And then what? A fine? Imprisonment? Or instead, that expedient for stateless persons like M. Poulianoff, an expedient that had the hallmarks of humanity, and few complications: deportation?

Soberly M. Poulianoff considered where next he should go. Not Poland. England, the United States, Australia? He wondered who wanted to be taught English by a Pole?

He gazed at the bare walls of his two rooms, became aware of a silence he had long cultivated for himself. He had no telephone. Friends were confined to chatty colleagues, who could be relied upon to criticise the mismanagement of the school. M. Poulianoff missed them.

All day, and the next, he waited on his bed, by the front door, at the window, first in one room, then the other, for someone to knock. Nobody knocked.

He ran out of milk, out of bread, of cheese, of tea, of expectancy. By the third morning panic seized him. He had been forgotten, his whereabouts mislaid. He had even failed to make a serious enemy.

It was pique at such neglect that sent him hurrying back to the school.

A JUNIOR FORM was singing through the multiplication tables. M. Poulianoff stopped in the corridor, caught unawares by a moment's tenderness. He listened to the end. Then, squaring his shoulders, he knocked at the Headmaster's door.

Brother Christian opened it at once, as if he had been kept waiting. "Come in!" His hand offered the hospitality of the whole room.

M. Poulianoff knew exactly what he had to do, and said so without prompting. "I wish to offer my resignation."

"Sit down . . . ."

"I've put it in writing."

The Headmaster was too busy getting into his own armchair to notice the letter held out to him.

"You've been ill . . .", hinted Brother Christian.

"I've been thinking about my life."

The Headmaster chose to find something humorous in the disclosure, and relaxed in his armchair to laugh more comfortably. "I was certain it had to be a matter of importance to keep you from your duties. . . . Ah, is that for me?"

He plucked at the letter stuck in M. Poulianoff's hand, and dropped it on his desk. "I'll read it later."

"It's the only honourable thing after what I did. . . ."

"What was that?"

"The day I left here, I was in such a terrible rage. The fact is, I threw a board duster at one of my own pupils, at Samir Adel Gazzar."

"You did?" The Headmaster shook his head. "No one told me." But he did not seem to mind the oversight.

"I lost control of the class. No, the truth is I have never had control."

Brother Christian, who was constantly being mistaken for a priest, was subject to explicit, humiliating confessions. He had learnt to recognise the symptoms, and was determined to hurry this one away. "I bet you had discipline at that moment, though", he chuckled.

"How dare you make fun of me!"

Brother Christian winced under the lash of M. Poulianoff's outburst. He was spared having to retaliate by the bell ringing for first break, followed by the screams of schoolboys just released.

He sprang to the window, from where his gaze could control the entire playground, and probe into those classrooms that led off it. After a while, he said: "Your pupil, Samir Adel

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Gazzar, has gone to England. With his father."

"Because of me?"

"Hardly!" Brother Christian turned round with a snort. "Because the King dismissed him from the Cabinet. . . ."

"Dismissed!" M. Poulianoff was appalled.

"I don't think the Pacha will go in want in Europe . . . *en attendant les autres*!" Brother Christian's hand rose, scooped the rest of the Cabinet, including the King himself, and dumped the lot somewhere across the sea. "It's only a matter of time", he added.

Suddenly Adel Gazzar Pacha, Minister, patron of the arts, old boy, was not the very least bit important. Not to *The Egyptian Gazette*, not to M. Poulianoff, certainly not to Brother Christian's school, and even less to Egypt.

"And the Poetry Competition?" M. Poulianoff jumped up.

"Without its author—stillborn. . . ." The Headmaster smiled at the metaphor. "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

M. Poulianoff realised that he was safe. He would not have to go now into further exile. But in his relief, all his former timidity returned, and he stood, waiting for some kind of direction.

The Headmaster, as ever, gave it.

"Do not worry. The school magazine will still publish your poem."

"It doesn't matter. . . ."

Brother Christian's face was grave. "Not to you. Not to me, either. But to all those parents out there. . . ." His hand englobed the whole of Cairo. ". . . they look for continuity!"

The bell for end of break rang. Both men, their senses sharpened to detect the least stirrings of rebellion, listened to the voices scattering away, stifled as door after door banged to a close. Seconds later the school was slumbering with the drone of learning.

The Headmaster frowned at M. Poulianoff, and made a point of glancing at his watch. "Shouldn't you be taking class?" he wondered.

"Normally, yes . . . but. . . ." The English teacher's eyes were glued to his letter of resignation.

Without fuss, Brother Christian slipped the letter into M. Poulianoff's jacket pocket, as if it were a tip.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER walked along the corridor to his classroom But within sight of it he faltered, shaking with nervousness. It seemed to him that he was about to step into a gladiator's arena, weaponless.

But no sound came from the room. All at once the door was wrenched open. M. Mattonini appeared, sponging the sweat off his face with an already damp handkerchief.

"Ah, you're back at last! Thank God! Well, the brutes are waiting for you!", he announced, and limped away, his shoes thudding on the tiled floor.

There was no escape from exile, and none in a classroom.

The thread of chatter snapped, and the boys shuffled to their feet. M. Poulianoff signalled to them to sit down. He intended to stand. Then he noticed on top of his desk, like a gift, his own copy of Shelley.

Startled, he looked up, suspecting a trick. Row upon row of faces stared back at him, hard-eyed, wary. They seemed to be expecting him to make some kind of comment.

He was touched by their gesture. He wanted to thank them, to like them. After all he owed them the best of his waking hours.

"Boys . . .", he shouted unnecessarily, then stopped, overcome with emotion.

He searched for some kind of support. His hand grabbed hold of the board duster. A shiver of apprehension rippled through the boys, as they prepared to wait, and watch out for that moment when their English teacher would hurl it down among them.

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Raymond Aron

Hope & Despair in the Western Camp

Reply to an American Friend

A MAN OF MY AGE benefits from one dubious advantage: when the dialogue between the Europeans and the Americans turns sour, he has a feeling of *déjà vu*. Neutralism in Europe, Isolationism in the United States—better red than dead or *besser rot als tot*—I have heard these words before, round about 1950. Then, again, some twenty years ago the Kennedy administration, inspired by academic strategists, initiated a great debate by imposing on the Atlantic Alliance a doctrinal conversion from "massive retaliation" to "graduated response."

In 1950, at a time when the Korean War was infecting Europe with a war atmosphere verging on panic, I wrote a reply to an American who had addressed a letter to Europeans saying much the same as troubled Americans are saying now. In it I advised him to pay heed to the disparity between the levels of risk faced on either side of the Atlantic. That disparity, which was not fully recognised by the United States in those days, lay behind the balance of hesitation on one side and of irritation on the other. In 1960, the European demand of 1950—we don't want to be "liberated", but to be defended—gave way to another demand of the same inspiration: We won't have Europe turned into a battlefield. The apparent acceptance of wars fought by "conventional means" caused considerable distress to the West Germans. Europeans refused to see the new doctrine of graduated response as a means of increasing the plausibility of resorting to nuclear weapons, and hence of enhancing the American deterrent. They perceived it as some kind of tricky sidestep on the part of their distant overseas ally, or even as an implicit agreement between the two Superpowers to spare each other's territory. This judgment was mistaken; but the position of sheltering under someone else's umbrella is always uncomfortable. A country, indeed a half-continent, whose security depends on another is inclined to suspect the capacity, or simply the resolve, of the senior partner on which it has been compelled to rely either by circumstances or by its own errors.

I do not hark back to these transatlantic controversies of 1950 (Korea) and 1960 (graduated response) merely to illustrate that favourite French proverb, "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*", nor to suggest that nothing has changed and that we are once again rehearsing a scenario that we all know by heart. On the contrary, I recall this recent past in order to throw some light on any new factors which may have arisen to influence our common future. Since you have issued a warning to Europeans—not by threats but by predictions—let me begin by analysing the present situation, in the hope of eschewing mutual recriminations in favour of a clinical objectivity, or at least something close to it.

IN 1950 Western Europe was devoid of any defence on the ground and appeared to be in the position of a hostage: in the event of war, the Russians would take revenge on the Europeans for whatever they might suffer from the Americans—a purely theoretical view, considering how improbable it seemed (or should have seemed) a mere five years after the Second World War that anyone would bring about another.

In 1960 the war—the second war—in Viet Nam

THIS *essay by* RAYMOND ARON *continues the discussion of "Transatlantic Tensions" initiated in* ENCOUNTER *(March) with the articles by Theodore Draper ("The Dilemma of the West") and Michael Howard ("The Causes of War"), and already commented on by Max Beloff (April).*

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had barely begun; Europe had acquired defences; and the Soviet Union had strategic missiles carrying nuclear warheads in the megaton range. What is in doubt this time is the credibility of American deterrence. For the United States, resorting to strategic nuclear weapons means incurring destruction equivalent to what they themselves would inflict on the enemy. Hence the oft-repeated aphorism that the Americans are not going to sacrifice New York or Washington in order to save Hamburg or Paris—which is a potent formulation arising out of erroneous reasoning, since it implicitly assumes the failure of deterrence, and then asks how the Americans would react. What would that reaction be? No one can answer such a question, least of all the Soviets. As long as some three hundred thousand American soldiers remain stationed in Western Europe, the Soviets cannot count on a passive United States; and so a direct military onslaught against the NATO countries would involve a risk that the Kremlin's code of conduct does not allow it to take.

Admittedly this kind of deterrence, based on uncertainty, is open to awkward objections, both intellectual and moral. In the end, it amounts to a bluff. It consists of threatening the potential aggressor with a sanction which would probably not be carried out if the aggressor did not take the threat seriously. The substitution of "graduated response" for "massive retaliation" tended to make the threat more credible, to reduce the discrepancy between the proffered threat and plausible behaviour, and therefore to reduce the element of bluff.

THE POLEMICS of the years 1961–63 subsided of their own accord. General de Gaulle preached and practised the diplomacy of *détente*. A few years later, Willy Brandt also took the road to Moscow and inaugurated the *Ostpolitik*. During those years from 1965 to 1973 (and even up to 1976), neither the Europeans nor the Americans focused their attention on the security of Europe, or even on the balance of forces, nuclear and conventional, between the Warsaw Pact and the Atlantic Alliance, between the Soviet Union and the United States. All Americans surely remember it: Jimmy Carter campaigned on a platform of *reduced* spending on defence. *Both* of the major American political parties share the responsibility for the military decline of the United States. It was the Nixon-Kissinger team which got rid of the US military draft and gained approval from Congress for returning to a volunteer army. Again, it was the Nixon-Kissinger team which gradually pared away the demands of the nuclear balance. The word "superiority" was removed from the vocabulary, and even equality was replaced by "sufficiency" or "equivalence." Mutual Assured Destruction became the precept or maxim of Western nuclear doctrine.

Simultaneously the "Viet Nam syndrome" deprived American diplomacy of the only principle which had more or less guided or inspired it. On the pretext that the United States had been either unable or unwilling to win the war in Viet Nam, the very idea of *Containment* fell into disrepute. Congress refused the dollars which Dr Kissinger requested in order to prevent the ascendancy in Angola of a Moscow-linked liberation movement. Furthermore, American intellectuals became bogged down in quarrels reminiscent to French intellectuals of the debates of the 1950s. The same Democrats who in 1960 were devoted to John Kennedy and his active anti-Soviet policy castigated both the Democrat Lyndon Johnson, who wanted to win the war, and the Republican Richard Nixon, who wanted to call it off without surrendering. The Protest movement did not confine itself to criticising intervention alone, and the handling of military operations; it also condemned the "immoral", what it even called the "criminal" nature of the war itself and its ultimate aim, namely to preserve the government of South Viet Nam and keep it independent of that of North Viet Nam. The opponents of the Nixon policy grew loud and numerous in their longing for the defeat of their own country, and in hymning the democratic virtues of the North Vietnamese régime, which happened to be one of the most Stalinist in the Communist world.

European public opinion certainly failed to support the United States during their great ordeal of 1965–75; but I shall not go on to criticise that, when American public opinion did much the same.

THE INVASION OF Afghanistan by Soviet troops apparently flabbergasted Jimmy Carter, who "learned more about the Soviet Union in a few days" than in all the rest of his Presidential term. Ronald Reagan, a classic representative of the Right wing of the Republican Party—the same Right wing which, ever since the Barry Goldwater fiasco, was supposed to be forever banished from

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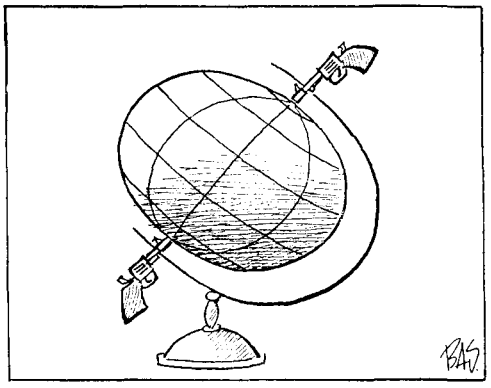
the seats of power—now occupies the White House, determined this time to restore the power and the glory of Uncle Sam. Judging by the words of the President and his colleagues, the country is yet again swinging from one extreme to the other. But let us be wary of words. As of now, what are the deeds, and what are the plans?

Ronald Reagan considers that previous administrations have allowed the military machine to run down. Today, the United States is no longer seen as the world's No. 1 military power, but as No. 2. To the question, "What is the foremost military power in the world?", the great majority of West Germans reply: the Soviet Union. (I, too, would give the same reply, although the question itself seems equivocal in my view.) Before going on to examine what aim the Reagan administration has set itself, let me specify in what respect the Soviet Union has outstripped the United States.

The hardened advocates of rearmament fall into two groups. On the one hand, those who concentrate their attention on the central balance; and on the other those who accord greater importance to the various shortfalls, to the reduced capability of the Army, and even of the Air Force and the Navy.

Comparison of the strategic nuclear forces gives rise to controversies which I believe it possible to sum up as follows. Each of the two Superpowers possesses thousands of nuclear warheads, and therefore the ability to wipe out the towns, factories, and the very social fabric of the other. But this equality of MAD ("mutual assured destruction") does not conclude the analysis. How can you deter the other side by threatening it with a sanction which would invite unbelievable disaster upon yourself? This equality does not imply the equilibrium of the central balance. Sharp critics of the previous administrations (you especially) have stressed the existence of an inequality in favour of the Soviet Union, i.e. in the capability for a counterforce strike. Once they are all deployed, those 308 SS-18s authorised by SALT 2 could, on paper, destroy 90 to 95% of the United States' ICBMs, the Minutemen (whereas these are not considered to possess an equivalent counterforce capability).



Now, according to the pessimists, this superiority gives rise to an extreme peril. In practice, the missiles carried by submarines or bombers do not have the accuracy of ground-based missiles. Once the Minutemen have been eliminated, the American retaliation, aimed at the broad target of towns, would trigger the "mutual destruction" for which no statesman could assume responsibility. According to this line of reasoning, the destruction of the Minutemen would amount to disarming the United States, which would be left with nothing but the means to negotiate for defeat, if not surrender. This scenario leads to the idea of the so-called "window of opportunity", the years of maximum Soviet superiority in the central balance.

I PERSIST IN SEEING this kind of scenario as an unlikely one. Americans, working from the idea that they would never strike first, have allocated the 2,400 missiles authorised by SALT 2 among the three types of vectors in a different way from the Soviets: submarines and bombers account for a higher percentage of the total in the West than in the East. An attempt thus to "disarm" the United States does not tally with the strategic theories and practices of the Kremlin, involving as it does so many inordinate and incalculable perils. I need hardly add that such an attempt, unlikely though it may be, is bound to weigh on the minds of statesmen on either side. No one can dismiss it altogether. All the same, reason suggests the following conclusion: that neither of the two has the means so to "disarm" the other. The Americans, in the foreseeable future, have no chance of regaining any kind of "superiority" over the Soviet Union at the level of strategic nuclear arms. The decisive question then is: Will the Soviet Union some day succeed in cashing some political or military advantage out of its superiority in missile payload and explosive power? I will not venture to give a categorical answer either way. The result is that henceforward neither of the two Superpowers has any real control over the tempo of escalation. If either one finds itself in a position of local inferiority it can threaten the other with climbing a few steps further up the scale, by using other

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weapons or by extending the field of operations; but the American threat no longer has the edge over the Soviet counter-threat.

IT APPEARS THAT the Reagan administration, in spite of its pre-electoral links with the "Committee on the Present Danger" group, does not attach priority to restoring the equilibrium of the central balance (taking for granted that this equilibrium has indeed been broken). The Carter administration had in principle adopted the programme of 200 MXs dispersed among several thousand silos, with the missiles shuttling underground between them. Current information is that Ronald Reagan is reducing the number from 200 to 100, plans to deploy only 40 of these, and is putting them into existing silos—he is, in other words, for the time being relinquishing the idea of making the American ICBMs invulnerable. His revival of the B1 (the bomber which Carter had abandoned) is awkward to justify; it will not be available till 1987, and in any case not till after the period of the "window of opportunity." The members of the "Present Danger" committee belong to the Reagan team without having imposed their ideas, at any rate not the ideas they professed in opposition.

The extra expenditure will be channelled mainly to the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. Will that produce an "equilibrium", or possibly an American "superiority"? Put in that form, the question is unanswerable. According to the figures published by the US Department of Defense, Soviet industry produces an annual arms output which US industry is quite unable to match, short of a deliberate programme of mobilisation. The comparison of the 45,000 Soviet battle tanks with the 10,000 American is fairly meaningless; but in 1980 Soviet factories produced 3,000 tanks (T72s and T64s), 1,300 fighting aircraft, and 11 submarines. Without switching over to what amounts to a war economy, American industry is simply not going to overtake the Soviet industry in this area of production. I am afraid that there are no grounds for supposing that in the event of an arms race the United States are bound to be the winners because they are "wealthier" (or to be precise, because their gross national, or per capita, product is greater).

NEVERTHELESS, the overall superiority of the Soviet Union in material and in numbers does not hold good throughout the world. It goes without saying that in Central America or the Caribbean the United States has an easy dominance whether by land, sea, or air. If hostilities involving the great powers were to break out in southern Africa, the probability is that the United States could commit more forces than the Soviet Union (though this too is a somewhat debatable proposition). Given an equality at the level of the central balance, the ratio of sub-nuclear strength assumes a greater if not decisive importance in all regions, particularly those where the vital interests of East and West are in play. The decision apparently taken by the Reagan team to resort to non-nuclear arms in preference to strategic nuclear arms strikes me as a sound one. But this decision, by itself, does not guarantee the return of the United States to the top position, or even to equality in the "hot spots."

SO AS NOT TO PROLONG this Letter to a Friend unduly, let me move on to Europe, and to the Europeans tempted by neutralism, unconscious of the danger or resigned to the status of becoming a Soviet "protectorate"—those Europeans whom the Americans will grow weary of protecting, allies who have slowly come to fear their protection.

Some hard facts are worth noting. Hundreds of thousands of West Germans gather to protest against nuclear arms or against the US Secretary of State, and only a few hundred demonstrate in Bonn against a Soviet or a Polish minister. According to the pollsters there is still a majority of Germans who favour the Atlantic Alliance and harbour friendly feelings towards the Americans.[1] But this so-called "Silent Majority" richly deserves its name —so silent that it leaves the streets to the sizeable active minorities, and finds few protagonists in the media or among the intellectuals. France, which has been spared for the moment by the neutralist tide, owes its immunity to two causes. The Socialist-Communist coalition now in power is paralysing the activity of the French Communist Party, and the official defence doctrine promises the French people *la non-guerre et la securité*. The nuclear arms in other European countries come from the United States; they are horrifying enough in themselves, and rather more so when they are controlled by a foreign government.

What, then, can be said by a European hostile to pacifism and neutralism to help Americans to understand these historic anxieties? First, and regrettably, one has to say some unpalatable things. Deep down, US diplomacy does not change

[1] See Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann's article, "Are the Germans 'Collapsing'?" in ENCOUNTER, February.

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as much as the language of those who control it, but I feel sure that you will admit that the American Republic, the necessary leader of the West, does not make the job easy for those who have no "old world" objections to following it. In the decade between 1965 and 1975 the United States gradually lost their domestic bearings at home and their guiding role abroad. Jimmy Carter, who is possibly judged too harshly at present, dashed European hopes on many occasions by his fudging, mudgings, and other self-contradictory uncertainties. Then suddenly, from the special language and practice suited to the ideology of *détente*, he went over to quite another style: not of Cold War, but at least of "Containment." With Ronald Reagan, the White House found itself housing a "super-hawk"—at any rate a verbal one, who keeps people on edge without clearly defining a policy.

The new president proclaims that the Americans mean to acquire a margin of superiority, whereas they do not have the means to get it, even supposing that they genuinely have the will and determination.

He created, *du coup*, the impression of a "hawk" all set to dispatch his marines against guerrillas everywhere, or to threaten all aggressors with nuclear retaliation. It is a picture far removed from the reality. Ronald Reagan is not making ready to set the world on fire. After all, it is (as in the old saying) Democrats who start wars and Republicans who end them. If the Democrats had helped Richard Nixon to call off the war in Viet Nam without capitulating, perhaps the agreement of 1973 would have been concluded sooner.

WHAT WORRIES ME is not the occasionally martial tone of the Republican team, or even the absence of a clear and definite policy, but the fact that it is intellectually unaware of the general predicament of the United States today, its situation in the Alliance and *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. Quite obviously, the American Republic remains the one great power of the West, the only power which combines geographical size with numbers and productivity, and with a comprehensive armoury. It therefore normally plays the role of leader or "*guide.*" But the West Europeans and the Japanese have caught up with the US in terms of technology and organisation; they stand at practically the same level, even though US scientific research still holds its lead. By the same token, the Japanese and West European economies are no longer dependent on the US economy, as they were in the 1950s or '60s.

"Comrade General, I think we're being watched again."...

Furthermore—and this fact weighs far more heavily in the scale—the United States no longer guarantees the safety of the lines of communication by which its Allies receive their raw materials and their energy. The Iranian revolution turned the geopolitical map of the Middle East upside-down. The forces of the Soviet Union are closer to the Persian Gulf than the forces of the United States. For some years to come, neither Japan nor Europe can do without the oil from the Persian Gulf (or, at least, they cannot do so without running the risk of dislocating their economies).

You will answer that the United States can do without oil from the Persian Gulf a lot more easily than the Europeans; and there you will be right. You will also answer that since the occupation of Afghanistan the Pentagon has gone full-speed ahead to establish a Rapid Deployment Force intended to intervene anywhere in the world, and particularly in the Middle East. It follows, then, that the Americans are committing themselves to defend a region of the world more vital for their Allies than for themselves. Far from looking on as disinterested spectators, the European nations should do their utmost to participate in this effort. There, too, there can be no difference between us. But that does not make the European response to the present state of affairs any harder to understand. As soon as it turns out that neither of the two Superpowers is assuring the security of the world market and the freedom of the lines of communication, then the Europeans scurry to the American alliance to cobble up counter-assurances and commercial safeguards.

It is an inglorious attitude, of course; but does the United States usually behave any differently? Let us look at the new factors which underlie the present *malaise*. By themselves, the Americans no

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longer have the resources necessary to carry out the functions they have been assuming for the last thirty years. Those functions have been (*1*) to guarantee a politico-military order indispensable to the prosperity of the world market; (*2*) to be a major participant in the defence of Western Europe; (*3*) to contain Soviet/Communist expansion throughout the world; and (*4*) to keep the balance of strategic nuclear forces. The Japanese and Europeans ought really to understand that it is not a matter of asserting their "independence" from the United States but of going on to do their share in the common task. The equilibrium of the central balance may be up to the United States alone; but the so-called "theatre" equilibrium in Europe requires common action from everybody. And here we reach the kernel of the debate: the defence of Europe, Nuclear arms, the East-West economic agreements between the Europeans and the Soviets . . . and the new Transatlantic tension.

THE EUROPEANS, for the most part, deem any major direct military aggression from the Soviets improbable so long as the Americans keep a sizeable army in the middle of the old Continent. Hence, public opinion is suspicious of the rather subtle reasoning by which governments strategically justify the deployment of the medium-range Pershing II missile, and of the Cruise missile.

For the experts, the aim of these missiles is to prevent the "decoupling" of the European theatre from the central balance. For the man in the street, they balance the SS-20s. For the protesters, they set the "Arms Race" running again, and constitute a priority target for the Soviet missiles. The pacifists and neutralists do not bother themselves with strategic considerations. They reject war unconditionally, possibly in the semi-conscious hope that the American alliance will continue to assure them their freedoms in the shadow of the Kremlin.

Let me now speak in the language of the strategists—what does "defending Europe" mean? For what means of possible attack should NATO be prepared? A first French scenario, that of General Gallois, involves a selective attack carried out by the SS-20s. The accuracy of these missiles is, I am told, so great that the few hundred nuclear warheads projected by the 300 SS-20s already deployed would destroy every vital point in NATO. Western Europe would be "disarmed" at one blow, without being utterly wiped out. The SS-20s' nuclear warheads have a low explosive power and would only cause limited collateral destruction. Some European experts refine this French scenario still further by supposing that the nuclear warheads would not strike the sector occupied by American troops—which would make a massive riposte by the United States that much more unlikely. This scenario remains in the realm of "science fiction" for the moment, although it opens up terrifying prospects for the future. Against this threat, real or unreal, I see only one parry: Deterrence. In my view, deployment of the Pershing II would reinforce this deterrence.

The second scenario, the one which is outlined in Soviet military texts, is more simple; the simultaneous use of all the means available, conventional and nuclear. Against this kind of attack Western Europe, even with the help of the American Forces *in situ*, is powerless, so crushing is the advantage of the offensive. But it seems to me that this scenario relates to the hypothesis of "a general total war between the two camps", to use the Soviet vocabulary. Except in unusual and unforeseeable circumstances, the men in the Kremlin would have to avoid this "*lutte finale*", which, although it is not ruled out altogether, their military textbooks do not categorise as "inevitable."

THAT LEAVES the last scenario of an aggression by conventional forces only, with the Europeans deterred from using their nuclear arms by Soviet counter-deterrence, fortified by the Soviet superiority in medium-range missiles. A combination of the first and third scenarios has also been put forward. None of these seems very likely to me.

The Soviets can hope to win the spoils of victory without actually making war. On the day when the USSR controls the Persian Gulf, it will hold the European economy at its mercy. Although direct aggression against Europe seems improbable to us, the Soviets with their constant preparations are going out of their way to convince us that it is plausible. They keep reinforcing their army stationed in East Germany. They are deploying the SS-20; and they are going to deploy the SS-21 and SS-22, which are battlefield nuclear weapons.

Can Western Europe, with the help of the United States, accumulate the means to deter, to dissuade, or to ward off all these modes of aggression? In the event of a total attack, I doubt whether any defensive is possible, so great is the advantage of the side which takes the initiative and makes the first strike. Against the possibility of "surgical" aggression by means of the SS-20, the sole measure of prevention consists of persuading the aggressor that he would indeed be starting a nuclear war. Finally, against

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an exclusively conventional attack the Western nations have to have enough available forces, if not to win the battle, then at least to prolong it and to make escalation a credible move.

To sum up the present state of play in somewhat blunter language, the Soviets, thanks to their kind of political régime, hold a major trump, that of being ready to hit first—a superiority which could be decisive within the narrow framework of Europe. With the SS-20s they are able to dismantle the Western defence system. The Soviets have also equipped themselves for an attack with conventional weapons alone, backed by the threat that with any use of nuclear weapons, whatever their calibre, they would reply with a nuclear barrage. In other words: the Soviets retain the choice of means, should they opt for war, for the simple reason that they find themselves in a position of superiority at every level—with the exception of the supreme level of strategic nuclear weapons, where they stand at the very least on an equal footing.

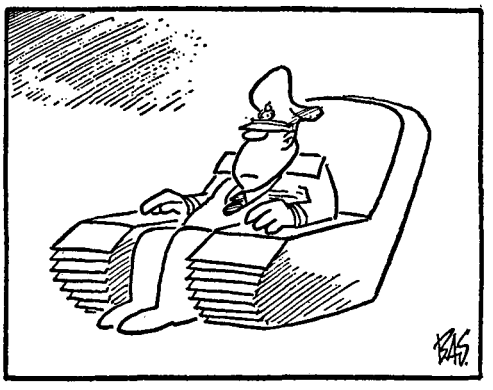
Are we to conclude that from now on the Soviets are the permanent grand masters of the game? That they will conquer Western Europe as it suits them, at a time of their own choosing? This is not at all my conclusion. In the European theatre, if they go in for striking first, the Soviets have every chance of coming out on top, whatever the scenario adopted. But all the scenarios entail a grave risk of escalation to nuclear extremes, and the men in the Kremlin do not embark on that kind of venture unless they are compelled to. It must be the task of the Western nations to behave in such a manner as to deter them from the venture. At the same time they must counter the other method open to the Soviets for conquering Western Europe, which is to gain control of the shaky Third World régimes that produce the vital raw materials, leading to a disintegration of the Atlantic Alliance, and a US withdrawal from Europe.

THIS BRING ME back to your prediction, that the United States *will* withdraw from Europe "if the Europeans lapse into neutralism and pacifism." I share your disquiet, and I take your warning seriously. But you cannot have it both ways. Either you believe that in the course of the next few years war, in the conventional sense, is going to break out—and in that case your government is nearly as much to blame as our own governments on this side of the Atlantic (because you feed the Soviets with your cereals, which are just as helpful to the Soviet Union as the machines from our factories); and your President should certainly sound the alarm and create a Western climate of urgency. Or else, as his words and actions suggest, President Reagan believes that the risk of military conflicts at some of the world's "hot spots" has increased, and that an effort to rearm is vital, without envisaging the intentional opening of a major war by a massive attack on Western Europe. In that case the West is going through a dangerous phase, more dangerous than any since the last War; but the danger derives from crises *outside* Europe rather than from direct aggression in the heart of Europe.

If we accept the second alternative, then the strategic controversy over the Pershing II and Cruise missiles is reduced to its proper, limited, dimensions. I think personally that the Pershing II and Cruise missiles strengthen the link between the European theatre and the central balance. But all these strategic and increasingly sophisticated speculations are open to argument. Those Germans who fear a limited nuclear war, and condemn the Pershing II for that reason, may be the unconscious victims of an understandable, if blind, dismay. But would some different strategic reasoning seem to them more convincing than the reasoning of the Americans?

In the same way, the response to events in Poland has produced the usual debate between hawks and doves. For motives that we all understand, West Germany has been striving to salvage something out of *détente* and to keep up East-West trade between the two halves of Europe. Hitherto the Americans have also refrained from either implementing or suggesting a total embargo on sales to the Soviet Union. What is possible and desirable surely lies between the two extremes of all-or-nothing, "to trade or not to trade."

Again, what I believe possible in the field of economic relations with the Soviet Union seems to me equally possible in the field of arms. To reinforce conventional arms *and* to deploy nuclear deterrent arms are complementary, and not con-



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tradictory, measures. It may be that there are quite a few Europeans who, deep down, would prefer a future Soviet protectorate to present American protection, with the risk of war which that involves. But those Europeans are not (yet?) in a majority. Once again, we have to fight the Western battle for people's hearts and minds which was fought—and won—thirty years ago. It can still be won. And its outcome depends to a large degree on the language of the American President, and of publicists in the United States. Ronald Reagan sometimes speaks from a pointlessly martial script, and you yourself go so far as to forecast a transatlantic split in the absence of a new European conversion which will not and cannot happen overnight.

I REPEAT: either we are in 1938, in which case we must go over to a war economy. Or else, if real peace remains impossible and war improbable, then it is up to us, both collectively and individually, to be firmer and more intelligent in an historic competition which dates back to 1917 and which will endure—if we avoid the worst—still further into the future.

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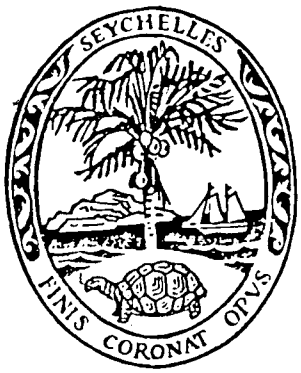
Fred Plaut

General Gordon's Map of Paradise

The "Secret" of the Seychelles



NOT MANY Generals can have gone to Paradise, for their profession involves slaughter on a large scale. And though some of them might deny that they killed with gusto, pleading that they acted in defence of the rest of us, I think General Gordon would have been honest enough to admit the charge. It would, however, be true to add that he had a truly kind heart, was assailed by terrible remorse, and was, by all accounts of the day, a good Christian. But whatever the outcome at the Last Judgment, it is certain that Charles George Gordon (born Woolwich 1833, slain at Khartoum 1885) is the only General in history who proved to his entire satisfaction where the terrestrial Paradise, the Garden of Eden, was located.

When the haze of hero worship which followed his death had dispersed, there remained an unusual and, in many ways, admirable as well as complex character.

He had started his brilliant military career as "Chinese" Gordon (because of the outstanding part he played during the Taiping rebellion) and ended it as "Gordon of Khartoum" (the city he refused to surrender). When he was sent to evacuate Khartoum, it was clear to those who knew him that the decision would end in combat, and sure enough, not only was the city besieged, but a tragedy unfolded as the *dramatis personae* confronted each other. The Mahdi was no less a convinced Moslem than Gordon was a Christian; and both, in their way, were noble warriors. Impulsive and hasty activity by Gordon was opposed by delay in organising an expeditionary force to raise the siege. On 28 January 1885 (it would have been his 52nd birthday) the relief column arrived. Gordon had been killed and subsequently decapitated two days earlier.

Is it as a hero who chose death rather than surrender his Christian faith or abandon his post that Gordon remains an impressive and fascinating figure? Certainly this interpretation was current at the time (25 books were written about him in the first 18 months after his death), and it strikes a sufficiently archetypal note to account for the nation-wide mourning and worship that followed.[1] But Gordon had courted death, and his behaviour at Khartoum was perfectly in keeping with his personality.

A man of remarkable integrity and fearlessness, Gordon was often very awkward to deal with, and was widely regarded as "eccentric", even a little crazy. He constantly quarrelled with authority, to the point of disobeying orders, and his tendency towards asceticism was certainly not shared by his Victorian contemporaries. Who else would have slashed his own salary, as Governor-General of the Sudan, from £10,000 to £2,000? "I am", he wrote, "like Moses who despised the riches of Egypt. . . ." The Chinese, too, had been decidedly anxious when he refused to take their bribes.

He suffered furious outbursts of temper, often followed by complete withdrawal—cutting off all contact, reading the Bible, and drinking cognac. Yet he was never seen to be the worse for drink. His tendency to self-criticism and remorse was considerable; when he emerged from his self-imposed isolation he was at pains to make amends to those he had hurt or punished. Indifferent to physical hardship, he could also long to lie in bed until eleven every day and eat oysters ("not a dozen but four dozen"). More than once he gave up alcohol and tobacco: it was a running battle between making a pledge and yielding to temptation. Yet, despite his unpredictable moods, all descriptions of him agree that he appeared to have been happy most of the time, good-humoured, and full of energy.

[1] Gordon is one of the four personalities described in Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918). The latest scholarly biography, to which I am indebted, is Charles Chenevix Trench, *Charley Gordon: An Eminent Victorian Reassessed* (Allen Lane, 1978).

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QUITE THE MOST IMPORTANT aspects of his character, for my purpose here, are his version of religion and his sexual orientation.

Gordon, in accordance with the ideal of the times, but unlike most Victorians, lived simply and gave generously to those in need. Abstinence was a virtue, and death the ultimate triumph of the spirit over the flesh: the dichotomy between the flesh and the spirit was for him absolute. Death was devoutly to be wished for, yet to hasten it would be sinful, for God had given us work to do—hence his utter fearlessness in the face of physical danger.

As to Gordon's sexuality, it seems obvious that he was more homo- than hetero-sexual. He avoided opportunities to meet eligible ladies, said that marriage was not for him, befriended young boys. It is improbable that he was ever a practising homosexual; in a man who lived so much in the public eye and had many enemies, this could hardly have escaped notice. The public view of his time was that a man could do without sex or amuse himself from time to time with those ladies whose profession it was. But, of course, there is no evidence to that effect either. But, no doubt, he suffered. At the age of 50, in a letter to a friend, the Reverend R. H. Barnes, he wrote, "I wished I was a eunuch at 14. . . ."

In his family history, there are no more than a few pointers to Gordon's development other than his having been a mischievous boy. What data we have are from his adult life, when he found his mother demanding and possessive after his father's death. This occurred in 1865, when Gordon was 32, and he dated his religious conversion to that year. Earlier, however, a mild dose of small-pox in China had made him reflect on things eternal: "I am glad to say", he wrote to his sister Augusta (a formidable spinster with whom he shared his theological theories in a long and voluminous correspondence), "that the disease has brought me back to my Saviour."

Although Gordon passionately believed that what distinguished Christianity from all other religions was God's in-dwelling in man, a condition was attached: belief in Jesus as God the Son. He printed and distributed his own religious tracts, embarrassing complete strangers with queries as to the state of their faith; and his constant Bible-reading led him to speculation far beyond what would be regarded as normal for a Christian living in the Victorian era. He determined where Satan would finally be imprisoned—in the centre of the earth, having been sucked down through the Dead Sea. Similarly, he decided where Our Lord now was. "Being a Man He must be in some definite place" (*Reflections in Palestine*, 1884). He concluded that Christ was hovering just over Jerusalem, above the Altar of the true Temple. "All prayer (from whatever part of the globe) must pass by and through Him. . . ." To a modern reader this might provoke comparison with a communications satellite, but for Gordon there was no "as if" about it. If the Lord and Satan were real, they must have H.Q.s—and these had to be properly located.

The Discovery of Eden

IN 1881, LANGUISHING on leave in England (one of his periodic resignations from the Army having been refused), Gordon met a friend, Colonel Sir Howard Elphinstone, who lamented having been posted to Mauritius, a terrible backwater for a Royal Engineer. Gordon offered to take Elphinstone's place; this was accepted and he left England shortly afterwards. From a letter to "My dear Elphin" we gather that Gordon may have regretted his generosity. However, once in Mauritius he took up his Bible studies again and also became interested in botany. The combination was important for what was to follow, for Gordon, receiving orders to look into the harbour installations on Mahé, the largest of the Seychelles, also visited the neighbouring island, Praslin, which he promptly identified as the site of the vanished Garden of Eden.

Praslin is the only place in the world where a palm tree grows which bears that strange fruit, the *coco de mer*. Gordon describes "its fruit shaped in the husk like a heart, when opened like a belly with thighs. . . ." I am quoting from a manuscript in my possession entitled *Eden and its Two Sacramental Trees*—it consists of eight folio pages in Gordon's writing, accompanied by two pages of maps in colour; it is signed by him and dated 26.2.82.[2]

Charles Chenevix Trench tells us that Gordon's theory was based on "the remarkable similarity between the ripe fruit of the *coco de mer*, a gigantic palm tree, and Eve's pudenda." Delicately put . . . and no one who sees the illustrations, including Gordon's photograph of the fruit, could mistake what he means. Certainly Gordon was in no doubt that this was the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge (Fig. 1).

THE *coco de mer (Lodoicea Seychellarum)* had occasionally been washed ashore in India and Africa. Before Praslin was discovered to be its original home, it was thought to grow at the bottom of the sea. Numerous legends surround it, including the not unlikely story that the Holy Roman

[2] This manuscript was the subject of a radio talk broadcast on 4 August 1955 by the then owner, Ray Rawlins, who had been a magistrate in the Seychelles; he vividly described the lovely climate and vegetation of the Vallee de Mai on Praslin, where Gordon had sited the Garden. The accompanying maps have, to my knowledge, never been reproduced.

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Emperor, Rudolf II, had offered 4,000 florins for one of the fruits because it was reputed to be an antidote to poison. A tale survives to this day that the semi-transparent, glutinous pulp (which makes good eating either as a fruit or as a vegetable) has "other invigorating qualities."

Although it is called a double coconut this is, according to botanists, a misnomer. What matters, however, is that there is a male and a female tree—and no difficulty in distinguishing between the two (Fig. 2). One writer describes the male tree as being covered here and there with groups of phalli each about eighteen inches to two feet long, and three or four inches in diameter—it is said that these become erectile after sunset and remain so until sunrise.

In another remarkable palm tree (the bread-fruit, *Artocarpus Incisa*), Gordon recognised the Tree of Life. So there were the trees, the climate was right, and "there was also a 3-foot-long serpent there", Gordon adds.

IT IS THE SECOND PART of Gordon's essay that is devoted to the Sacramental Trees, and the opening sentence of these pages reads: "God has used instruments at all ages, to manifest Himself to man, these instruments though nothing in themselves, were everything when connected with Him" (MS. p. 5). Gordon gives a few examples showing that

> "when things are done with, they pass back, are relegated into ordinary things . . . thus there is no reason why the two trees which were in the Garden of Eden should not exist to this day. They fulfilled their functions and are relegated back to their ordinary condition. The bread and wine in themselves are nothing yet they are Christ's flesh and blood."

Gordon's explanation for the dual nature or state of being is in keeping with his dichotomy between the flesh and the spirit, and these are accompanied by a more elementary one, between male and female. After the "belly and thighs" comparison, he continues:

> "It is a magnificent tree, the Prince of trees in every way and full of types, its germination is extraordinary when taken with the words ye generation of serpents."[3]

The point here is that "the tree of knowledge" is not hermaphroditic like the coconut palm, but is divided into two sexes. Gordon's "types" look as if they foreshadowed the "Fall" by virtue of this sexual differentiation and germination—they represent the forbidden knowledge on a botanical level. Like the other objects which he enumerates as examples of ordinary things, the "extraordinary" germination was apparently all right, since when "God used them, they were most holy" (MS. p. 5). Yet Gordon never succeeded in accepting the union of opposite sexes, even as a necessity for the propagation of mankind, although the requisite parts were being, or could be regarded as being, used by God.[4]

Gordon needed a reconciling symbol, and the illustrations make it understandable that the sight of the forbidden fruit of the *coco de mer* displaced the authenticity of the humble but traditional paradisical apple. When he had "pretty well settled the site of Eden, of the Garden and the Trees of Knowledge and Life",[5] he rejoiced that "Milton

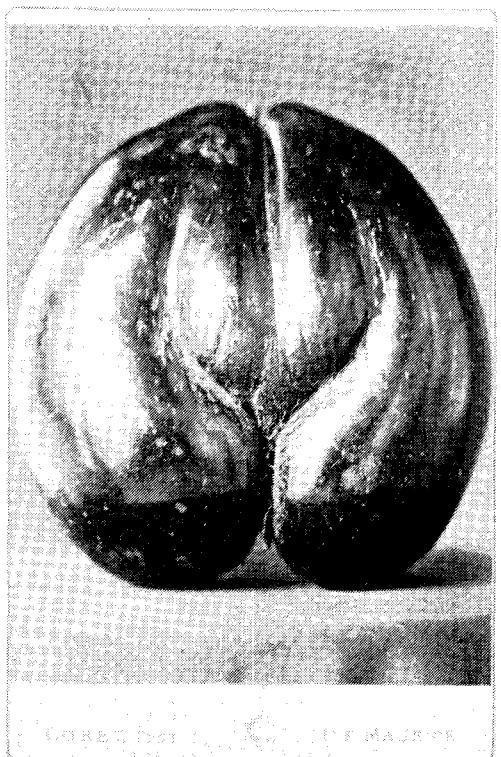

Fig. 1. Fruit of the coco de mer, photographed by Gordon.

[3] Cf. *Matthew*, III, 7–8: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

[4] Trench quotes the correspondence between Gordon and W. Scott (Superintendent of the Royal Botanical Garden at Pampelmousses) which includes anatomical sketches by Gordon of Eve's reproductive system. Gordon wanted to know whether the flower of the bread-fruit (his Tree of Life) was male, female, or hermaphrodite. Would Scott put him in touch with the Liverpool doctor who had examined a pregnant man? Sexual confusion, sexual differentiation, and union—and above all, the search for a way in which union could be made comprehensible—seem to have been the mainspring behind Gordon's curiosity.

[5] Gordon used the same word in a letter to his sister as Speke did when, nearly 20 years earlier, he announced to The Royal Geographical Society: "*The Nile is settled.*"

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wonderfully works it into my idea", and he quotes from *Paradise Lost* (Book IV, 1.218):

> *And all amid them stood the Tree of Life*
> *High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit*
> *of vegetable gold*

Milton (though not Gordon) continues the line as follows:

> *and next to life,*
> *our death, the Tree of Knowledge, grew fast by—*
> *Knowledge of good, bought dear by knowing ill.*

The omission is significant. Gordon never forgave Eve, or accepted the Fall as a necessary evil; and he selected from Milton's poem only those lines which he regarded as confirmatory evidence for his topographical discovery. But Milton's description was poetic and symbolical, not to be used as a guide-book, as Gordon seems to do.

GORDON THEN EXPATIATES on the sequence of events in the Garden:

> "Adam (and Eve) were perfectly free from any temptation except that of eating of the Tree of Knowledge. Luxury, power etc. etc. which are temptations to man now could have no effect on these two, the only way they could be tempted was by their stomachs and by curiosity."
> (MS. pp. 6–7)

> "They ate and they fell. Now I believe that neither had the very faintest idea of what would follow, that their act was one we commit every moment, as to say forgetting God and trusting self, heedlessness, greediness, forgetfulness. They were poisoned, and I must say that I think, if it is looked deeply into, there is a close analogy between the first eating and the second eating of Christ's Body and Blood. By the first eating we commune with Satan, by the second eating we commune with [illegible word in MS.] Christ."
> (MS. p. 7)

Here Gordon is travelling a well-worn path, reminiscent of his pamphlet, issued in earlier years, entitled *Take Eat*. Christ's injunction "Do this in remembrance of me" (the words accompanying the Communion) are then repeated, and the tone of the MS. becomes admonishing and preaching:

> "We shall never get power over our bodies till we take the antidote of the poison we have in us, a child can understand you have eaten what does make you ill, eat this for your cure." (MS. p. 8)

A little later he castigates Eve (without excusing Adam or accusing Satan): "What did Eve think, did she go and study the tree, no, she took and ate to see for herself, she wanted to gratify herself. . . ."

Obviously he saw no connection between Eve's lapse and his own insubordinations and episodic incontinence—his rages, drinking, and excessive smoking. Although for secular occasions he relied on self-control or will-power (Richard Burton, the African explorer, noted Gordon's "controul"), he could not escape his obsession. The flesh *must* be defeated by the spirit. The only antidote to the poison of the first eating (the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, from which springs sexuality) is the second eating, the Sacrament of the Communion. The bread and wine become the means or instruments by which we are purified of wilful disobedience.

THERE ARE A NUMBER of extraordinary contradictions in all this. Firstly, Gordon's conflict—between wanting to do good and be abstemious on the one hand, and his inclination to contrariness on the other—finds its remedy in the Communion and, generally, in trying to follow Christ. He believes in that antidote *literally*: not by transubstantiation, but as if it consisted of minute particles descending from Heaven. Similarly, he regards the attributes of evil as having been physically introduced into Eve's body: "the fruit was the vehicle of the virus of evil" (and he does

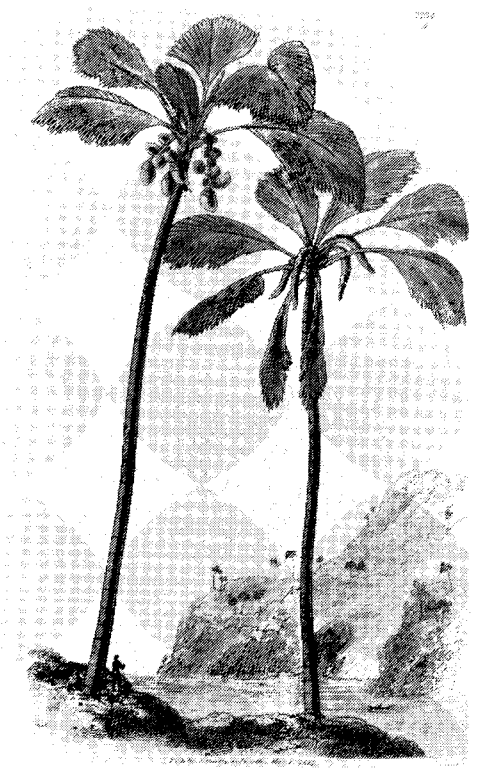

Fig. 2. Male and female coco de mer (Lodoicea Seychellarum). *Aquatint engraving by W. J. Hooker, in the* Botanical Magazine.

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not use this phrase as a mere metaphor).

Secondly, while the Fall is brought about by temptation (via the stomach), it introduces sexual knowledge. And for Gordon there appears to be no Sacrament, such as marriage, which will counteract that poison. Eve cannot become "the means" or instrument by which God works.

Gordon seems to have forgotten that Jesus, the son of Man, was thereby also a descendant of Eve, albeit with the addition of special purifications (the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Birth). Milton summed it up by writing about the Messiah: "So God with man unites. . . ." Not for Gordon these glad tidings. Eve, and thereby Man, remains unredeemed during her lifetime, except for occasional dispensations by means of the antidote.

The manuscript ends on a note of modified pessimism (MS. p. 8):

> "The two trees are here now, and we eat daily sometimes of one, sometimes (less frequently) of the other the tree of life. In return, the tree of knowledge is dying out, men have eaten it nearly up, its effects are manifest, the tree of life shall exist more abundantly, but few eat of it, except the poor. The table of the Lord is contemptible not worth considering. *Mal.* 1, 7."

This final statement contradicts the earlier assertion, namely the return to the ordinary state of things after God has made use of them. Their instrumentality persists in a negative way when Gordon requires it to serve as a dire warning, no doubt as much to himself as to those he wanted to address, and God's "union with man" via Eve and the Virgin is denied.

Gordon had been stimulated by the sight of the "forbidden fruit", the *coco de mer*—and his ideas, intuitions and rationalisations did the rest, finding expression in the manuscript and the accompanying maps. The major driving force for his extraordinary theories seems to be the return to a conflict-free state, prior to temptation—to be a eunuch at fourteen . . . to be dead. His literal child-like comprehension of the Bible—and his apparent inability to grasp symbolic meanings—helps us to understand his longing to return to the Garden of Eden as it was before the Fall.

Gordon's Map & the Rivers of Eden

THE OPENING SENTENCE of "Eden and its Two Sacramental Trees" reads: "God works by means and by natural laws." (The phrase "by means"—according to the *Shorter O.E.D.*—refers to the resources, but also to the instrumentality, of things or persons.) And so I have deliberately postponed discussion of the first part of Gordon's MS., for the motivation for the search, the means or instrumentality, should come before "the natural laws."

Gordon used his knowledge of these laws in order to rationalise what he intuited after seeing the *coco de mer*. His geographical and geological arguments, if one can call them that, certainly strain credulity where he relies for supportive evidence on the Bible and on etymology. But when he proceeds to account for the four rivers of Eden, his knowledge as a Royal Engineer is harnessed in support of his thesis; and this is where we meet the working of his mind in its most original and ingenious, but also eccentric, productivity. For the lengths to which he had to go to make the rivers flow to his location are nothing short of extraordinary.[6]

THE FIRST LOGICAL STEP for anyone taking *Genesis* as his guide-book is to reconstruct the world as it was before the Flood—and Gordon makes us imagine, with the help of an illustration, the way the rivers flowed at that time. He stipulates a habitable zone or belt around the Equator, towards which (before the earth was tilted on its axis) all rivers from the melting northern and southern icecaps flowed. When God's breath, in the form of fire, produced the Flood, it caused the toppling over by $23\frac{1}{2}°$ of the upper northern hemisphere (because of its greater land mass, it carried more ice than the lower hemisphere). Floods do not change the general features of land, but simply modify them by silting up rivers in low-lying land, or blocking up channels and causing rivers to change their course.

Gordon writes (MS. p. 2): "To the Rev. Berry I owe the final thought on the subject of the site of Eden. I had already thought that the two trees were distinguishable at Seychelles." He now reverses the usual interpretation of *Genesis*—that a river flowing from Eden watered the Garden and then branched into four streams. The mass of men read it thus:

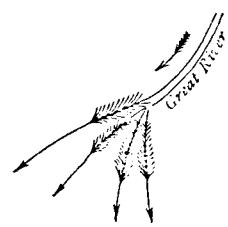

Fig. 3a.

But Gordon, with the help of the Rev. D. Berry,

[6] The essential outline of his Eden thesis can be found in the manuscript and maps (I omit most of his Biblical references). However, other sources add further details: e.g. *Events in the Life of C. G. Gordon*, by his brother Henry William Gordon, published in 1886, the year following Gordon's death; and the correspondence between Gordon and W. Scott.

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translates this not as "four rivers" (or streams) but as "four heads" (i.e. origins), which form one great antediluvian river basin: "in no instance in this world do we find four rivers flowing out of one river, while there are many instances of four rivers flowing into one."[7]

Fig. 3b.

Gordon then states that west of the Seychelles there is a deep basin in the Indian Ocean. (This is correct: it has a depth of 2,600 fathoms.) He mentions a cleft near Socotra which has two branches, one of which runs up the Persian Gulf, the other up the Red Sea. (I have not been able to trace these "branches" from the information likely to have been available to Gordon; and modern oceanography does not confirm their existence.)

The Tigris, having been joined by the Euphrates, comes down the Persian Gulf and forms the eastern branch. "We have therefore two rivers—we want two more", writes Gordon (MS. p. 3), clinging fast to elementary arithmetic.

The remaining two rivers are called "Pison" and "Gihon" in *Genesis*. While other reconstructions regard the Gihon as the Nile and the Pison as the Indus or Ganges, Gordon's does the opposite. He admits that we have no very clear clue to these two, but as Babylon and Nineveh, situated on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were opponents of Israel, "so the other two rivers we want must have this peculiarity also."

Whatever the truth of the matter, it would be difficult to find a better example of how misleading an argument by analogy can be. By a variety of attributes, other than Egypt's enmity to Israel, Gordon proves to his satisfaction that the Pison is the Nile.

> "The Nile is considered by good authorities to have once discharged into the Red Sea and its changing its course after the Flood is not a very improbable thing as the land is low and much silt must have swept down with the melting glaciers."

The Canal of Hero appears as a dotted line on Gordon's map—although not lettered as such, his brother's biography makes this explicit. Hero was an Alexandrian mathematician and inventor who lived *c.* 250 B.C.; the canal connected the Nile north of Suez with Lake Timsah and hence down the Red Sea. The anachronism of the antediluvian situation represented in Gordon's map is obvious, for the Flood predated the Canal.

"THE GIHON is the next river", but its course proves even trickier than the Pison's. Gordon identifies the Gihon in the now dried-out river-bed or brook just south of Jerusalem which by a deep ravine falls via the Valley of Fire into the Dead Sea. As for the common denominator, the opponent of Israel, he writes:

> "In Genesis [II. 13] Gihon is said to encompass the land of Cush. Cush was the son of Nimrod and Nimrod was of Assyria."

In the sentence which follows, Gordon finds a rather confused way of regarding genealogy and hereditary enmity as more important than the historical geography which usually equates the land of Cush with Ethiopia. He simply reiterates, "I therefore think the Gihon [in the vicinity of Jerusalem] is the Gihon of Eden."

There remains the difficulty of bringing Gordon's Gihon from the Dead Sea into the Red Sea, but this is overcome (in the main) by means of an underground river.

The rest is plain sailing. The cleft coming from the Red Sea carries the waters of both Pison (Gordon's Nile) from Suez and Gihon from the Gulf of Akaba. It flows via Aden. "Aden is Eden", writes Gordon. What could be more obvious? For "Eden was a district [i.e. in what is now the Indian Ocean], the Garden of Eden was a chosen spot." The antediluvian river-beds joined north-east of the Island of Socotra, and from there the great river flowed south-by-west to water the Garden of Eden, as shown on Gordon's manuscript map (Fig. 4b).

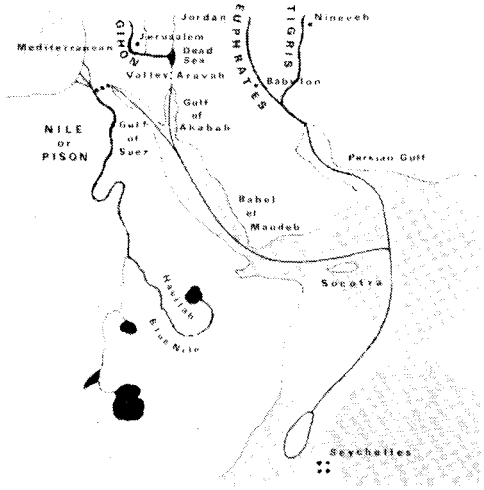

Fig. 4a. Redrawing of Gordon's map (by Stephen Draper).

[7] These drawings and quotations are taken from H. W. Gordon's biography (pp. 262–63).

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The Earthly Paradise

GORDON'S TALENT for drawing maps had been noted at school; his letters are interspersed with elegant little sketches and illustrative maps. But it is chiefly Gordon's idiosyncrasies which give him a unique place among modern cartographical reconstructions, for although he may have been aware of other attempts in modern times to locate the site of Eden, there is no indication that he had the slightest idea that he was following in the footsteps of Christian cartographers going as far back as the 6th century A.D. What are the reasons for this remarkable regress?

Such is the complexity of historical and psychological factors that a classification, however rough, is required which will provide a perspective and a background against which Gordon's map can be viewed. For although I am primarily concerned with all portrayals and localisations of Paradise, what I have to say applies to early cartography in general, inasmuch as it reflects the meeting of inner, preconceived pictures of the world or cosmos with outer, geographically observed reality.

How, then, does one put Paradise on the map?

STAGE I. The earliest surviving maps are predominantly cosmological, reflecting man's inner world and his relationship to his gods and creation. Such maps became encyclopaedic, and in pictures and descriptive words presented all the mythological and legendary knowledge of the world. Religious centres and shrines held prominent or central positions (thus, the holy Mount Mega Meru from which all rivers flow is found in a Buddhist world map).

Gradually, figures and symbols became interspersed with place-names and more or less recognisable geographical features. As knowledge of the earth's surface increased, the legends became fugitives—no fixed abode could be found for deities or demons. During the Renaissance, however, the scientific *Geographica*, notably of Claudius Ptolemy (Alexandria, 1st–2nd centuries A.D.), was rediscovered, and from the 15th century onwards maps were reconstructed from his descriptions, based on measurements which included a grid for measuring latitude and to some extent longitude.

The maps which followed frequently featured expanding scientific knowledge mingled with retreating legendary and mythological images. Sea charts for example were designed for practical use in navigation, but their makers also inserted traditional symbols and decorations, thus keeping a foot in both camps.

In the beginning of Christian cartography, which can be traced back to one Cosmas Indico Pleustes,[8] it was sufficient to quote Scriptural evidence and to account for natural phenomena like the rain or the

[8] Cosmas was an Alexandrian monk who lived in the 6th century A.D. The oldest known copy of his *Topographia Christiana* containing this map and other illustrations is in the Vatican Library, and dates from the 9th century.

Fig. 4b. Gordon's map.

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rising and setting of the sun by *ad hoc* inventions—a gigantic mountain, the firmament, and the like. In short, there is no difference in principle between Cosmas' *Topographia Christiana* and cosmologies which originated in other parts of the world: God (or gods) had created the world, and all observable phenomena worked according to His (their) plan; it remained for man to read God's mind through tradition and revelation.

Cosmas' map, like many earlier world schematisations, does contain recognisable geographical features (the Mediterranean basin, the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, the Caspian Sea). In the main, however, the world was constructed according to an analogue of the Tabernacle, shaped according to instructions given to Moses, as revealed in *Exodus* (Fig. 5).

Cosmas paid less attention to *Genesis* than his successors, who felt free to move away from his oblong table of the tabernacle-shaped world. But all agreed that the Garden of Eden lay "to the East" (*Genesis*, II, 8), where God had planted it and created Adam.

BUT EAST OF WHERE? By tacit assumption, the medieval Christian cartographers assumed that it must be east of Jerusalem, the nub and centre of the world. That this assumption was based on an anachronism (for where was Jerusalem before the Deluge?) did not seem to matter. Nobody was surprised at the difficulty of finding the site. Since man had been driven out, and re-entry was forbidden, certain security arrangements were only to be expected. High walls, mountains and flames figured high on the list; but distant and inaccessible places would be obvious locations, and islands were a favourite choice. When Asia became better known, and Eden still remained as elusive as the land where Gog and Magog were imprisoned,[9] "the New World" became one possibility. On the whole, though, the island theory holds pride of place in some of the best-known medieval maps (such as the one in Hereford Cathedral, *c.* 1300), and Gordon's Garden in the Seychelles clearly has connections with theories which were depicted 1,200 years before his "discovery."

Cosmas had resorted to a separate vertical oblong shape, east of his table-like world, separated from it by a circumfluent ocean but vaguely connected with it by the four rivers, notably the Nile (Geon as spelt by him, in Greek). The schematised illustration of a map which originated from a Spanish monk's world picture-map (Beatus de Liebana, who wrote a commentary on the *Apocalypse* in 776 A.D.) shows the considerable progress made during 200 years. Although the earlier copies (Fig. 6) retain the oblong, rectangular shape, the later 12th-century "Beatus"-type maps adopt the disc shape which was by then generally accepted. All these later medieval maps, with their mixture of illustration and rough-and-ready localisation, have in common the symbolisation of Paradise by means of Adam and Eve, the Tree of Knowledge, the Snake, and usually the four emergent rivers; Paradise is localised and oriented in the east, on top of the map.

[9] All these, and other fantasy locations and illustrations, can be seen on medieval maps, especially of Asia.

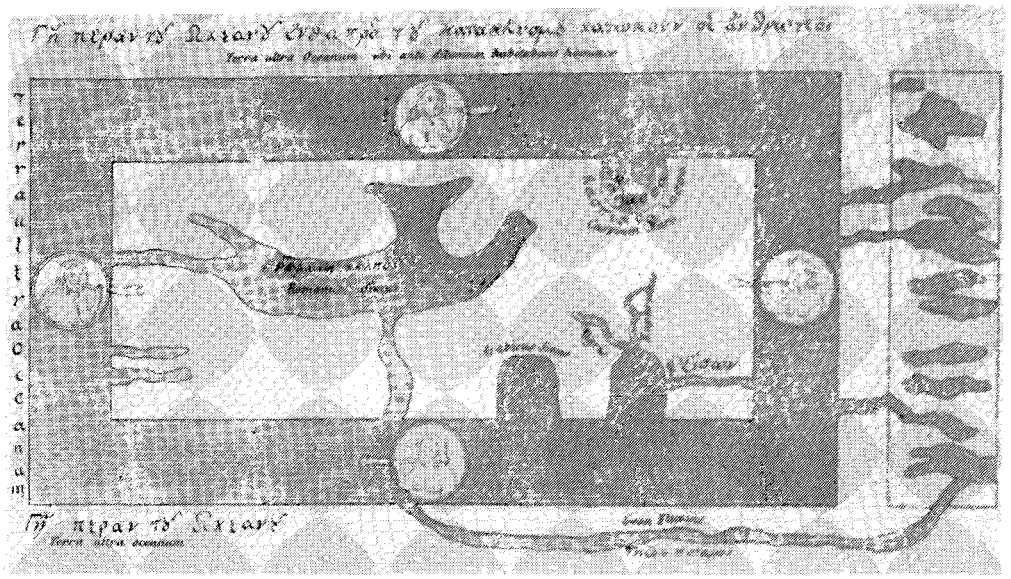

Fig. 5. Cosmas' Tabernacle-shaped world, watered by four rivers flowing from Paradise.

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IT WOULD BE WRONG to assume that Christian cartography was closed off by doctrine from other influences. Even within the Church, minds quite unlike Cosmas' worked along lines which were at once observant (as indeed Gordon was) as well as schematising. Foremost among these, and almost a contemporary of Cosmas, was Isidore, Bishop of Seville (570–636 A.D.). His small, circular world schema (Fig. 7) show some of the Christian conventions (a tripartite world, divided among Ham, Shem, and Japhet), but distinctly non-Christian elements appear in copies of his *Etymologies* and *Origins*.[10] In any case, support for a disc-shaped world could be found in the Scriptures: "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the world" (*Isaiah*, XL, 22), etc.

The rediscovery in the 15th century of Claudius Ptolemy's 1st–2nd century A.D. *Geographica*, and progress in the mapping of Asia, placed cartographers of Paradise in a difficult position—steeped as he was in Greek science, Ptolemy had no place for Paradise. There were now only three ways open to those who wanted to place it on the map: (*1*) to find a location in a hitherto unexplored part of the world, such as the interior of Africa; (*2*) to extrapolate the Garden of Eden from the globe altogether; or (*3*) to reconstruct its position before the Deluge had washed it away.

STAGE II: *Paradise banished.* The map which illustrates the exclusion of Paradise shows the complexities which beset any classification of maps. The chart from which the section has been taken belongs to the family of Portolano charts, which were designed for the very practical use of helping navigators to find harbours. But facts are still mixed with imagination: their makers decorated the land with details of kingdoms and legends, and populated the seas with various and sometimes fictitious creatures. The relevant detail (Fig. 8), taken from K. C. H. Kretschmer's 1897 map, is a reconstruction of the original chart (1450) at Modena. Adam and Eve kneel in prayer on either side of the Tree of Life, and in the centre of the fenced-off district is the source from which the river issues. Having formed a lake, it divides into four rivers. The river in the left upper corner is

[10] The letter T, within the O of the disc-shaped world, represents horizontally an imaginary line from the Don to the Nile, and vertically the Mediterranean. This suited both Christian and Greek speculation, because Jerusalem at the junction of the T was thus placed in the centre of the habitable world. T-in-O simplifications and other abstractions in the form of geometrical designs appear in some of the earliest known maps, such as the Babylonian map in the British Museum which dates from the 5th century B.C.

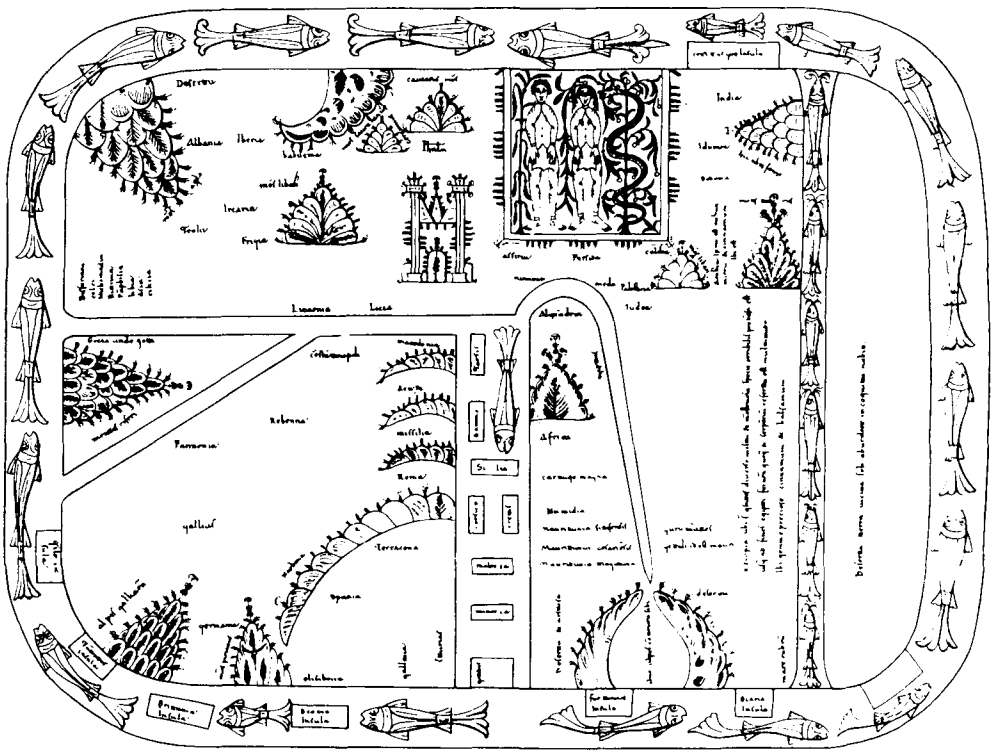

Fig. 6. The rectangular world of Beatus, 787 A.D.

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probably the Geon, or Blue Nile, which joins up with what could be the White Nile. Six diamond mountains—so the anonymous author of the chart informs us—spew flames to high heaven and thus guard the earthly Paradise.

Fra Mauro of Venice showed as early as 1459 how Paradise could be banished from the world, and yet be honourably placed. His large circular mural map in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana represents a geographical knowledge which goes beyond Ptolemy's, yet still finds space for other kinds of knowledge, for the corners left by the large circle within a square are filled by smaller circles, and one of these shows a circular walled garden with Adam and Eve on one side of a central tree and God on the other. An angel guards the entrance, and four rivers issuing from the circle complete the picture.

During the flowering of Dutch map-making in the 17th century, Fra Mauro's device was adopted and elaborated by cartographers who filled with detailed scenes from classical or biblical mythology the background of hemispheric world maps and the gaps left by the two circles. In Joannes Janssonius' map of 1632, a charming Adam and Eve scene in the Garden (Fig. 9) occupies the upper central gap between the hemispheres, while the Last Judgment fills the corresponding lower space. Paradise has been relegated to the rank of a mere decorative detail.

STAGE III: *Paradise reconstructed.* In the rapid progress of geographical discovery following the Renaissance, all hope of discovering the site of the Earthly Paradise as if it were ingeniously hidden, but still extant, had to be abandoned. The admission was made reluctantly—Columbus, experiencing the mighty current of the Orinoco River, believed that only the river that flowed from Eden could have such force. Paradise searchers, guided by Biblical reference, were forced to fall back on the task of locating the site of the Garden of Eden by reconstructing its pre-Flood site.

This led to a number of more or less plausible hypotheses. One of the earliest resitings, by Salomon van Til, was published with a beautiful map in Amsterdam in 1701. *Tractatus de situ Paradisi Terrestris* bears the significant subtitle, *Dissertatio singularis Geographico-Theologica*, and affirms the site indicated by the Scriptures. Like most of his successors, the author selects Mesopotamia as the location. Van Til's map (especially the river system) is invented, and all four rivers find their way into the Persian Gulf.

RICHARD HENNIG (1950) in his *Wo lag das Paradies? (Where was Paradise Situated?)*—provides a useful list of references to those who have sought to locate Eden. Curiously, van Til is not mentioned; nor did Hennig seem to know of General Gordon. He does, however, refer to Sir William Willcocks' lecture and essay, "From the Garden of Eden to the Crossing of the Jordan" (1919). Willcocks was an expert water-engineer in the Middle East; and despite his numerous Biblical quotations Hennig, on the whole, takes him seriously, and agrees up to a point: if there ever was a Garden of Eden, it must have been situated in Mesopotamia.

In case it may be thought that reconstructing the site of Eden is the prerogative of eccentric Englishmen, let me say that *Die Entdeckung des Paradies* by F. von Wendrin (published in

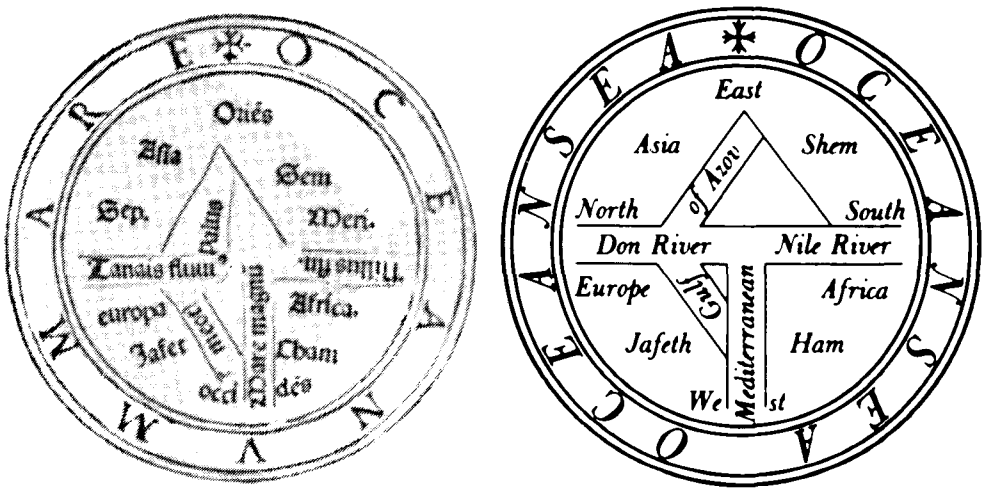

Fig. 7. T-in-O Map of Isidore, Bishop of Seville, and explanatory diagram.

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Braunschweig in 1924) locates Paradise in—East Germany![11]

Symbol & Reality

I HAVE CHOSEN examples of maps both ancient and modern, in order to provide a graphic record, for the phenomena under consideration are fairly common and may throw light on the ways by which theories are conceived or even "proved" in all areas of knowledge. We are often inclined to forget how powerfully faith and convictions enter the finding of evidence for new theories, and certain maps seem to provide powerful illustrations of what occurs when different types of knowledge meet.

Gordon tried to combine Scriptural revelation with geographical and physical knowledge as well as his intuitions and prejudices, and although his personal motivation runs like a red thread through his quest for Eden, if taken alone it would be misleading. The collective climate of opinion and knowledge, those "archetypal" impersonal aspects, must also be taken into consideration. Gordon's attitude to death—that we were far better off "on the other side"—was an article of faith widely held in Victorian times. The General used it on occasion to salve his conscience, at other times to face danger fearlessly, or merely to console himself when in despair. His Friend was always near. The dead, he once wrote, know "the answer to all things." And if Gordon had his personal sexual problems (he never acknowledged them), these could be regarded as part of the Victorian conflict between the flesh and the spirit. But the majority of people find acceptable compromises; Gordon could not.

"Inner" (pre-conceived) and "outer" (observed) maps illustrate a comparable conflict. There are times when the divergence becomes untenable. I have mentioned the way in which the T-in-O map of classical descent was made compatible with Christian doctrine. Originally based on a geometric concept of the world, the map presented a satisfying order, keeping chaos at bay; and Jerusalem was neatly slotted in at the centre of the world. But while this schema might conceivably have inspired Pilgrims to the Holy Shrines, it could never have been used as a guide. If one wanted to know "how to get there", what was required was an "outer" map showing the route.

WITH THE DISCOVERY of America and the circumnavigation of Africa, the tripartite world schema became obsolete, though it took some time for the shock to sink in. (Columbus died in the belief that he had merely discovered some islands on his way to the East.) But such was the strength of the Roman Church before the Reformation that this authority could take the new discoveries in its stride. No sooner had Columbus returned to Spain than Pope Alexander VI issued a Bull of Demarcation concerning the new discoveries.

Where was Jerusalem now? Before the discovery of America, it had functioned as a symbol because of its two requisite components: one tangible, the City; the other, ultimately ineffable, its spiritual significance. With the Holy City no longer the centre of the known world, the power of that symbol as a focus of Christendom was weakened.

Just before Gordon's time, Christianity received a further jolt in the form of Darwin's theory of

[11] The book is also remarkable for its anti-Semitic thesis that the Hebrews laid false claim to Paradise as situated in their sphere of influence, that they perverted the evidence and thereby stole Paradise from the Germanic races. It ends in the exclamation: "Lord, free us from domination by inferior races!"

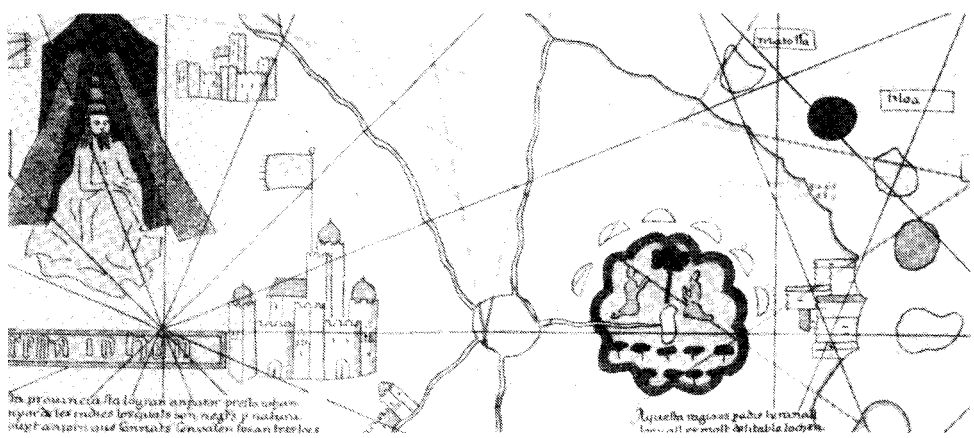

Fig. 8. Detail from Kretschmer's reconstruction of 1450 Portolano chart.

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evolution. The world, including the interior of Africa, had been explored;[12] no Garden of Eden had been found. All this required a new understanding of the Scriptures, a grasp of their symbolic significance which would reconcile the opposites of Spirit and Flesh, City and Centre. The new discoveries threatened the state of relative equilibrium between revealed and observed knowledge, a breakdown of the old unquestionable order.

AND GORDON? Christianity was of the essence to him, yet he remained incapable of that symbolic or mythological understanding which now more than ever his religion required. This was a collective conflict, and a Christian of Gordon's integrity could not escape it. There were no half-truths of the kind which enable a child to listen to a fairy-tale with suspended judgment, knowing it to be true on one level—yet not altogether, not *really*. For a man like Gordon, it was essential to establish irrefutably the literal truth of the Scriptures. Paradise must be reconstructed and the Holy sites properly located in Palestine.

In 1883, two years after his Praslin expedition, when he was trying to identify the exact site of the Crucifixion and of the Holy Sepulchre, his motivation focused on places of worship and a desire to prove the Palestine Exploration Society wrong—especially their maps. But the Garden of Eden could not be regarded as a place of worship. If anything, it was forbidden territory.

Gordon's literal-mindedness drove him to speculate also about the arch-enemy, Satan, whose base had been the waters of the Deep. When land first emerged at the site of the Rock and Satan heard God's voice, he fled as far as he could—to a point near Pitcairn Island. (It was no coincidence that the mutineers from the *Bounty* later chose to settle there.) And Satan, naturally enough, chose the island of Praslin as the site of his counter-attack, which resulted in the Fall.

The more intelligence Gordon had about Satan's dispositions, strategy, and weapons (all deducible from the location where he had previously triumphed), the better he would be equipped to resist the enemy's nefarious designs. Certainly a less enthusiastic General would not have drawn on sources consisting of such varied "evidence" and speculations to arrive at conclusions which nobody else would credit. These extravaganzas exemplify what is likely to occur when symbolic thinking is defective: it is replaced partly by literal thinking, partly by quasi-religious, superstitious, and magical thought-processes. The legends surrounding the *coco de mer* are of that quality.

Although we are inclined to smile at fanciful tales and speculations, it is worth remembering that in times of stress most of us can regress to such atavistic levels, and then the longing for a unified inner and outer world becomes particularly strong. "As on earth, so in Heaven." As outside, so inside. Macrocosm is equated with microcosm. "It is All One World"[13] might be the battle cry when our capacity to perceive and evaluate symbols is waning. The wholeness of a world image had

[12] With the exception of the polar regions, but then they were too cold ever to have been eligible as a site for Eden.

[13] The medieval picture of a whole world was also an alchemical symbol, as C. G. Jung reminds us, quoting the alchemist Gerard Dorn, who used the term *unus mundus*, meaning the potential world of the first day of creation, with which he hoped to be united by means of meditation and the alchemical process.

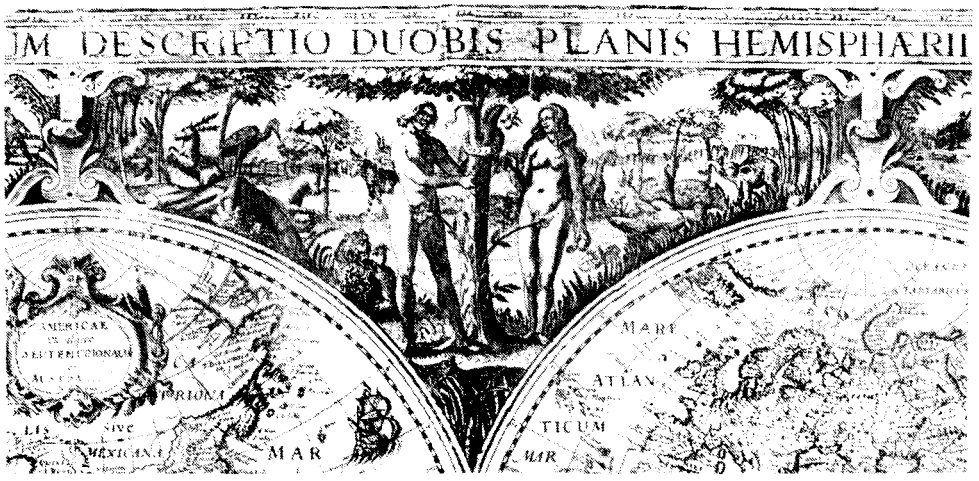

Fig. 9. Detail from Janssonius' map, 1632.

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to be abandoned as geographical discoveries accumulated; but the longing for unity and for unified knowledge lived on. It is an ideal which must be treated as such, must be recognised as a symbol; but in some states of mind the temptation to transpose the symbol into literal reality cannot be resisted, and Gordon's reconstruction of Paradise is an attempt of this kind.

There are moments when several strands in a person's life come together, making sense out of apparent chaos and nonsense. The moment when it all "clicks" cannot be recorded, but we are tempted to find proof of what has taken place, and perhaps also to hold on to moments which are ineffable and unrepeatable. The urge to do so is, in part at least, determined by our inability to trust that what happened was "real."

It is the same with trust in symbols and their imagery. Whatever the ingredients required, such trust is a variable entity, differing from person to person, and within one person's lifetime, according to circumstances. Gordon knew about his extreme contradictions: "How odd it is", he wrote, "that we judge one another as if each of us was consistent."

THE STORY of the Temptation and the Fall, being driven out and lost, then found again, requires the symbolic grasp of an eternal theme. It may well be a sad truth that evil, alias "the Flesh", cannot be defeated by the Spirit, or by a return to a pre-Fall state of innocence and immortality. Yet in some measure Gordon achieved both, post-humously, when he became a hero. In view of his tragic ending, the crest of the Seychelles Islands, designed by Gordon and showing the *coco de mer* in the centre, together with the motto "THE END CROWNS THE WORK", seems particularly poignant. For, dying as he did, he incarnated the original wholeness, the symbol of that Paradise for which he searched in vain.

Stranger on a Train

The writing on the window
Is riddled with clichés, a "realistic" landscape
For the stranger killing time.

Here's the train
Chuff-chuffing past the allotments
And yellow bedroom curtains of the final terrace,

Two men carrying paint
Forever across a field, the loyal station-master
Easing his feet into dog-eared slippers

And that bare, swept platform
Where I'll finally step, avoiding the puddles
And fumbling in pockets for the porter's tip.

Soon, now, this train
Will turn quietly inside out, whenever I look out
There'll be myself looking in through the glass—

That boy, up by the fence
On the embankment's edge, above the scree of tangled
Bushes, refuse and scorched grass, waving

And waving to nobody who is here.

Charles Boyle

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CHAUVINISM can be very insidious. I've always thought myself an internationalist, eager for peaceful solutions to world problems, anxious to see the United Nations develop teeth. When Britain and France embarked on their Suez adventure in 1956, I was one of those who bombarded MPs with telegrams to protest against the breach of international law. But what happened when Argentina seized the Falkland Islands? I felt the bile rising like a gusher: stand back—I may explode. And what was I really angry about? The use of force, the violation of the peace, the subjugation of 1,800 Britons who don't want to be Argentines, the cant about "colonialism" when no one was being colonised, the implausible promises and unveiled threats of a Right-wing military junta. All were avowable grievances. But beneath the expressions of outrage were much more powerful, atavistic feelings. It was intolerable that Britain should be so humiliated—that so little had been done to forestall the invasion—that the Foreign Office should seem to know less than the newspapers. It was insane that so much should be spent on *Trident* and so little on conventional, task-force deterrents which could actually be used. The French or the Israelis would never have been caught napping like this.

Such was the immediate reaction—hardly less primitive than the dancing in the streets of Buenos Aires. The rights and wrongs of the original dispute were a hazy memory from the history-books. In a rational world, there was room for discussion, for debate about principles, procedures, and safeguards, not just wounded national pride. But suddenly the world had ceased to be rational, and so had I. We were back with the emotions of Nelson's navy. Chauvinism lurked, after all, behind the most civilised of tee-shirt mottos. "*Make love, not War*"? Rubbish! Put the tin-pot dictator in his place!

Nor, of course, was I alone. Politicians of all parties were making similar noises. Their words were often impeccable: but the sentiment growling in the voices like a figured bass was the sound of old Adam, or old John Bull.

Mind you, I don't want to knock it. Basic, ancestral, territorial patriotism is too easily ignored or derided. Intellectuals, in World War II, thought of themselves as fighting Nazism and Fascism: but millions more were fighting to defend their country, their homes, their families. If some of that emotion were canalised into work, it could do wonders for the economy. Sublimated into European teamwork instead of budgetary squabbles, it could give Europe a decent role in the world.

But emotion is like fire—useful when contained, dangerous when out of control, sometimes difficult to detect, hard to extinguish, yet liable to go out when you want to keep it going. And what worried me about my own primitive feelings—to say nothing of other people's—was not only the danger in the Falkland Islands crisis, but the volatility of public opinion, likely to be just as fickle as fire.

John Bull, in his heyday, had been a realist.

We don't want to fight,
But by jingo if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men,
We've got the money too.

That, in its way, represented a rational calculation: there was no great gap between illusion and reality. Ever since then, the gap has been gradually widening; and habits of mind appropriate to a past time have lingered on in a greatly altered world. Consciously, we're all aware of the limits now imposed on the exercise of national power. We know that no European country can now match the USA, the USSR, China, or any other potential giant. We know that Britain and France were the last of Western Europe's imperial powers, and that their empires have vanished. We know that neither the French *communauté* nor the once "British" Commonwealth was ever more than a comforting balm for post-Imperial withdrawal symptoms. We know that the public has become profoundly civilianised—physically softened by inactivity, demanding a standard of living once confined to the rich minority, unwilling to accept national service, afraid of defence and reluctant to spend money on it, recalcitrant in the face of authority, demoralised by unemployment, dazed by television, obsessed with personal concerns. Hardly the stuff of which the Eighth Army was made—or, if it was, only in a dire emergency, with much propaganda, and after long and rigorous training. And we also know that behind the Eighth Army was a vast expenditure of resources made possible partly by the possession of an empire and partly by the liquidation of most of Britain's overseas assets.

We know all this. But do we feel it? Not when an Argentine dictator twitches the lion's tail. I choose the metaphor deliberately: by the time you read these words, the odds are that someone else will have used it. The British lion, Britannia, John Bull—all the cartoon figures snap into service when in such a context we hear the words "Her Majesty's Government." They remind me of another cartoon image—the scene so familiar in Disney films, when some animal, racing furiously, shoots over the edge

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of a precipice, but still goes on running horizontally in mid-air.

NOR DOES THIS APPLY only to our attitudes in foreign policy. One sees it in domestic affairs too. Some months ago, I was thinking of moving house. I did the rounds of estate agents, and received countless prospectuses. Many boasted of "period features . . . exposed beams . . . believed of Tudor origin . . . sympathetically modernised . . . separate dressing-room . . . bathroom *en suite* . . . proximity to the hunt." I had once read a novel by Christine Brooke-Rose about house-hunting; and I now began to wonder whether the life implied in these descriptions wasn't a variety of fiction itself. It seemed to involve a seigneurial existence in a manor house with a staff cottage, riding with the Quorn, endlessly laving and anointing the body, dressing in some private cubicle, probably in knee-breeches, and lording it before the assembled peasantry while the chauffeur polished the Rolls.

Great stuff, I thought. The impression was strengthened by the advertisements in *Country Life*. Then I read Mark Girouard's *Life in the English Country House*, and learned that the magazine had been founded in, as it were, the late Gallo-Roman epoch of the country house's history, just before the end of the 19th century, by "a romantic and country-loving businessman", and that it was read by his like—members of the urban middle classes yearning to retire to the countryside they were despoiling. So there was an element of illusion, even then. Later, P. G. Wodehouse, Dornford Yates, and television helped to make the English country house a potent national daydream—so potent that, according to some theorists, it accounts for Britain's failure to be businesslike enough: a nation of gardeners pretending to be Lord Emsworth is no match for ruthless tycoons.

AT TIMES, of course, the illusion collides with reality. It did in the case of Dornford Yates. A. J. Smithers's recent biography[1] reveals several key facts about that weaver of daydreams. First, he came from a lawyerly, middle-class family, one of whose members was a black sheep. Secondly, his characters' country house, "White Ladies in the county of Hampshire", began as a modest, vicarage-like edifice, and became palatial only in the later stories. Thirdly, the author himself tried hard to create around him the enchanted world of his characters, first building a mansion near Pau, then after World War II, disgusted with French "bolshiness", moving to Rhodesia, where he built a smaller, similar retreat. It was no longer possible to pursue that particular form of the good life in Britain. It petered out in the nostalgic, marooned, ossified survival lampooned so cruelly by Tom Sharpe in his novel *Indecent Exposure*, where patrician colonialists re-enact episodes from Dornford Yates's books.

Anyone who has lived in a British "colony" abroad will recognise the atmosphere. I first met it in Rome, in Babington's English Tea-Rooms. Since then, I've seen it in a score of places: the artificial re-creation of life as it was in Britain many years ago. Perhaps the Falkland Islanders shared something of that super-patriotism. Britain, for them, meant more than Toxteth and Tony Benn.

No less telling was the case of P. G. Wodehouse himself. Because a man spends his life spinning daydreams for others, he need not necessarily be only a dreamer himself. And if Wodehouse was insulated from much of the real world, it was not by living in a mental Blandings Castle, but by a lifelong absorption in his craft—and his old school's cricket. His wife looked after many practical affairs, it seems, while Wodehouse concocted his frothy fantasies—with steely concentration—and exchanged letters about how Dulwich was doing in the away match that term.

Then, one day in 1940, German soldiers appeared in Le Touquet, and not long afterwards, Wodehouse was carted away to internment. On his release, due partly to American pressure but mainly to the approach of his sixtieth birthday, he was chump enough to record five talks for transmission to the USA—largely, he said, because he wanted to thank his American readers for their cheering letters. If the talks had been broadcast from London, there would have been no problem: but they went out on German radio from Hitler's Berlin.

Instantly, there was uproar. Wodehouse was accused of treason. People who had never heard the talks believed the worst about them. Word went round that Wodehouse had broadcast Nazi propaganda. The British Government put up a popular newspaper columnist to vilify him in a BBC talk. Even Wodehouse's friends found it hard to justify his action. After the War, he regretted it bitterly himself; as he said, "captivity softens the brain."

Years later, in 1954, ENCOUNTER published texts of the talks supplied to it by Wodehouse. They proved, if proof were needed, that he had said nothing treasonable: all he had done was describe, in humorous stiff-upper-lip fashion, what must have been a frightening and unpleasant experience in a series of makeshift internment camps. The wonder, now, is how the Germans let him say some of the things he did. But then, Dr. Goebbels was a

[1] *Dornford Yates: A Biography*. By A. J. SMITHERS. Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95.

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brilliant propagandist: perhaps he knew what he was doing.

The whole story of P. G. Wodehouse's war was for a long time only partially told. Wodehouse was understandably sick of the subject, and the man who reported on it for MI5 and the Home Office was reluctant, or forbidden, to talk. Now at last, however, the Conservative Member for South Aberdeen, Iain Sproat, has dug out all the facts that are ever likely to be known.[2] They prove conclusively that Wodehouse was foolish, not wicked, and that he was also rather brave.

TO ENCOUNTER READERS, the most interesting section of Sproat's book will probably be its first Appendix, which reprints the five broadcasts in what it calls "Official transcripts made by the German Foreign Office." As Sproat says, "the version published by ENCOUNTER is substantially different." Reading that, one might suspect skulduggery. Having collated the texts, I'm puzzled, but reasonably convinced that there was none. The tenor, structure, and wording of the two versions are for the most part identical. The discrepancies seem likely to have arisen at three separate points in the process.

The first is editing at the studio. Several chunks of the ENCOUNTER texts obtained from Wodehouse himself are missing in the German "contemporary transcript." They may have been removed at the script stage, either by the censor or in order to fit the time. Whether it was possible in those days to edit tape (and whether tape, wire, or even disc was used for the recording) we are not told. If the tape itself was edited, it may explain the dropping of the odd word, such as "little", in the description of a German *Kommandant*: "He was a fat, short-legged little man"—a phrase that might have offended some servant of the *Reich*. Even with more primitive editing techniques, it would have been possible to remove some of the breezier flights of Wodehousean fancy that were apparently never broadcast. Alternatively, they would have had to be cut before the recording—in which case Wodehouse would have had to help.

This seems to me the most likely explanation for changes at that stage. It would also account for the apparent interpolations—most notably the prefacing of the fourth broadcast with an elaborate explanation of why Wodehouse was talking at all. The Tone of this section, missing from the ENCOUNTER text, is much more sober than the rest. Perhaps Wodehouse wrote it: he was certainly pained by the criticism he had by then received. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was a Wodehousean rewrite of a draft made by someone else. I'll come back to the change of tone.

The second stage in the process is, of course, in Wodehouse's study. Whether he made carbons of the original talks, kept the originals, or retained his first drafts, is again a matter of speculation. If he had to send ENCOUNTER texts based on the first drafts, that might explain most of the changes—but not all. In several cases, dull or obscure details have been edited or explained for a British audience. And some of that, of course, may have been done by a sub-editor in London, at stage three.

I'm inclined to plump for an explanation combining all three stages: cuts for censorship, cuts for length; muddle of texts and helpful editing by Wodehouse; possible copy-editing in the ENCOUNTER office. But the real question is: did Wodehouse wilfully falsify what he published? And the answer, I think, is "No—with two exceptions."

One is the excision from the text of some disparaging remarks about the Belgians: "It was my stay at Liége, and subsequently at the Citadel of Huy, that gave me that wholesome loathing for Belgians which is the hall-mark of the discriminating man. If I never see anything Belgian again in this world, it will be all right with me. . . ." Wodehouse may have felt, understandably, that this was excessive. It would certainly have affected his sales in Brussels and Liége.

The other significant omission was of a reference to the German invaders: "a fine body of men, rather prettily dressed in green, carrying machine guns." The "fine body of men" phrase had been attacked by his critics already: perhaps they knew little of his ironic use of clichés.

Which brings me back to the question of tone. Wodehouse repentant makes sorry reading, in his explanations for broadcasting. He can only really carry off his own brand of flippancy—which he used when apologising for his folly, after the War. But flippancy only works in a context of security, in the Elysian world of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster and Aunt Agatha—or of Dornford Yates's Berry & Co. And that world, if it ever existed, belongs to a past when Britons could afford to feel superior. Now, if they want to be superior, they have to be willing to afford the price.

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[2] *Wodehouse at War: The Extraordinary Truth about P. G. Wodehouse's Broadcasts on Nazi Radio.* By IAIN SPROAT. Milner & Company, £8.95.

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Covenanters

Jesus

He wore no hat,
but he produced, say
from up his sleeve, an answer
to their question about
the next life. It is here,
he said, tapping his forehead
as one would to indicate
an idiot. The crowd frowned

and took up stones
to punish his adultery
with the truth. But he, stooping
to write on the ground, looked
sideways at them, as they withdrew
each to the glass-house of his own mind.

Mary

Model of models;
virgin smile over
the ageless babe,

my portrait is in
the world's galleries:
motherhood without

a husband; chastity
my complexion. Cradle
of flesh for one

not born of the flesh.
Alas, you painters
of a half-truth, the

poets excel you.
They looked in under
my lids and saw

as through a stained glass
window the hill
the infant must climb,

the crookedness of
the kiss he appended
to his loving epistle.

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Joseph

I knew what I knew.
She denied it.
I went with her
on the long journey.
My seed was my own
seed, was the star
that the wise men
followed. Their gifts were no good
to him. I taught him
the true trade: to go
with the grain.
He left me
for a new master
who put him to the fashioning
of a cross for himself.

Lazarus

That imperious summons! Spring's
restlessness among dry
leaves. He stands at the grave's
entrance and rubs death from his eyes,

while thought's fountain recommences
its play, watering the waste ground
over again for the germination
of the blood's seed, where roses should blow.

Judas Iscariot

picked flowers stole birds' eggs
like the rest was his mother's
fondling passed under the tree
he would hang from without
realising looked through the branches
saw only the cloud face
of God and the sky mirroring
the water he was brought up by

was a shrewd youth with a talent
for sums became treasurer
to the disciples was genuinely
hurt by a certain extravagance
in the Master went out of his own
free will to do that which he had to do.

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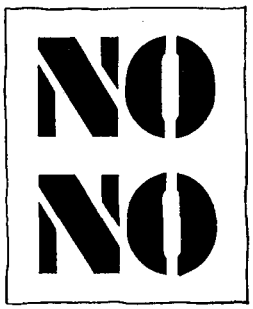
Two Afterthoughts on Susan Sontag

The Incident

By Peter Shaw

New York City



WHEN Susan Sontag denounced Communism as "fascism" at a February 6 rally for *Solidarity* in New York's Town Hall, she elicited several rounds of boos. Inasmuch as the event was partly sponsored by *The Nation* Institute and had a roster of speakers including Pete Seeger, Paul Robeson Jr., and the event's organiser, Ralph Schoenman, Ms Sontag can hardly have expected a sympathetic hearing for such a proposition. Yet surprisingly enough, in the published critiques that soon appeared on the Left her denunciation of Communism proved not to be at issue.

On the contrary, as Sontag wryly observed in her reply to critics in *The Nation*, "wonderful to hear, each of my respondents claims to have never been deceived by the nature of Communist tyranny." What seemed most to have offended was Sontag's moral and psychological explanation for her own and the rest of the Left's past self-delusions about Communism. "For many decades", she had charged, "when horrors exactly like—no, far worse than—the horrors now taking place in Poland took place, we did not meet to protest." Why? Because "we were far more concerned to discredit professional anti-Communists."

The sin of the Left, in other words, lay in its obsession with the Right. "We were unwilling to identify ourselves as anti-Communists because that was the slogan of the Right." Rather than be so identified, she had employed a "double standard" for the truth. Regarding Communism, "people on the Left have willingly and unwillingly told a lot of lies." In the end: "we did not love the truth enough."

One passage in Sontag's speech elicited particularly vigorous booing. In it she asserted that between 1950 and 1970 a reader of the despised *Reader's Digest* would have been "better informed about the realities of Communism" than a reader of *The Nation* or the *New Statesman*. The paragraph ended with the question, "Can it be that our enemies were right?" On the one hand, Sontag was suggesting, when the Left had succumbed to "the angelic language of Communism" it had actually been in love with "fascism", a phenomenon of the Right. On the other hand, the part of the anti-Communist Right that the Left had always most despised had now won the judgment of history.[1]

In the face of the outrage elicited by her analysis, Sontag retreated. First, when the *Soho News* (a Manhattan weekly modelled on the *Village Voice*) printed her speech from a tape recording—minus two paragraphs—she sued for copyright infringement. (There was no outcome, inasmuch as the *Soho* went out-of-business soon afterwards.) At the same time she supplied her own version of the speech in *The Nation*. Here, in addition to revising its language, she omitted the offending passage about the rightness of the *Reader's Digest*. (The *Nation* editors included it in their introduction to the speech, however. Later, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, Sontag said that the passage had been "extemporaneous.")

Yet Sontag did not in fact back off from her main contentions. She would not agree with her critics' insistence that Fascism is worse than Communism, and she would not agree to distinguish "among Communisms." Furthermore she rejected the claim that *Solidarity* could be considered as an admirable development of Communism itself. And finally, Sontag declined to preserve her Leftist credentials by the time-honoured device of offering a purer Marxist utopia.

She attempted instead to preserve her status by

[1] See Christopher Hitchens, "New York's Left: a 'Moment of Truth'?", ENCOUNTER, May, p. 82.

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another familiar device—dissociating oneself from the wrong people. Thus her speech opened with a hackneyed, ritual denunciation of the Right. "I cannot help but single out Reagan", said Sontag, "Reagan the union-buster, Reagan the puppet-master of the butchers in El Salvador." His administration's "support for the Polish democratic movement", she revealed, was "utter hypocrisy." In fact, the West's feeble responses to the Russian-directed crushing of *Solidarity* had actually helped to seal the demise of that movement. As Richard Grenier pointed out in *The New Republic*, this was a popular argument at Town Hall: "Other speakers, too, gave the impression that the Jaruzelski crackdown was almost a joint Capitalist-Soviet operation. . . ."

Somehow the familiar incantatory attacks on the Right and the West did not work this time, at least for Sontag. And so she revised her speech—not so much in what it said as in its rhetoric. Where she had chided herself for being concerned chiefly to discredit professional anti-Communists, the *Nation* version simply mentioned that professional anti-Communists had been "among" our "enemies." And on second thoughts she inserted a reminder of "the rightness of many of our views and aspirations, in particular our sense of the madness of a nuclear war between the superpowers and our hopes for reforms of the many injustices of our own system." On the other side of the balance the "*horrors*" of the present "Communist régime" in Poland were softened to the "disgrace" of the régime.

OTHER REVISIONS were more substantive. The revelations about Polish Communism in Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind*, which according to the speech had appeared to Sontag as nothing more than "an instrument of cold-war propaganda" in 1953, turned out in revision to in fact have "*troubled*" her at that time. Nor had she really been "*sure*" that what Milosz and other "premature anti-Communists" reported "was not true." Instead, she had been "*suspicious of*" their accounts.

One of those invited to comment by the *Soho News*, Marshall Berman, rehearsed Sontag's history of making outrageous statements, and quoted her to show that she had long believed that "unintelligibility, obsessiveness, painful truths, lies, bad grammar" were the essential materials of the modern writer. For Berman, though, not the errors about Communism that Susan Sontag was conceding reflected her hypermodern attitude toward writing, but rather her new equation of Communism with fascism.

Richard Grenier pointed out that Sontag had a long record of political misjudgments followed by admissions of error, including previous spasms of disenchantment with Communism: "Her attacks of anti-Communism are plainly cyclical." And Martin Peretz, Editor-in-Chief of *The New Republic*, commented: "People like Susan Sontag, they should really have no political standing in the world. . . ."

SUSAN SONTAG EMERGES as having been consistent over the years chiefly in being wrong. But in answering her critics in *The Nation* she at last put her finger on the habit of mind that has long guided not only her but others on the Left as well. "I hardly thought Milosz was lying", she now wrote. "I bracketed what Milosz and the other émigrés were saying. That is the phenomenon I was addressing." "Bracketing", it must be said, almost perfectly describes the mechanism of denial—psychologists call it "cognitive dissonance"—that has always permitted fellow-travellers to avoid unpleasant political truths.

In Sontag's speech, continued "bracketing" permitted, on the one hand, the denunciation of Communist sympathisers for their past attacks on anti-Communists, and on the other hand the continued use of precisely such attacks of one's own on contemporary anti-Communists. Thus after being "welcomed" by Diana Trilling to "her new difficult life as an anti-Communist", Sontag lashed out: "Diana Trilling welcomes me to the ranks of *her* anti-Communists (thanks but no thanks)." Trilling had been uncomplimentary about Sontag's Stalinist-like abuse of the word "fascism", and about her "reductive" use of "professional anti-Communist." Yet Sontag's rejection appears to have rested on Mrs Trilling's record of having been a "*premature*" anti-Communist—exactly the cause, as Sontag herself pointed out, of her once having "bracketed" Czeslaw Milosz.

But what accounted for the phenomenon of Sontag continuing to exemplify the very habit of mind she deplored? Again her speech gave an indication of the answer. It defined the Town Hall gathering's purpose as "*to distinguish ourselves from others in the course of virtuous indignation.*" More important than the fate of nations, in other words, was the maintenance of an unsullied political purity. At all costs it was essential to separate oneself from both "Reagan and Haig and Thatcher" and the liberal anti-Communist, Diana Trilling.

This act of quarantine was especially necessary regarding El Salvador, at the moment a far more pressing issue for the Left than Poland. Sontag made her priorities abundantly clear by referring at the end of her *Nation* reply to "the democratic movement in El Salvador, whose struggle to overthrow the tyranny backed by the American government I passionately support." No passion was mentioned in connection with Poland. (Needless to

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say, "the democratic movement" referred to El Salvador's Communist guerrillas.) Sontag's sudden discovery of Communist tyranny in Poland could be made compatible with denunciation of America. But to denounce Communism in El Salvador was tantamount to endorsing American policy there.

Furthermore, there has to be at least one approved insurgent movement on the Left at any given time, and at this time that movement was located in El Salvador. To commit oneself to it "passionately" on the same day as one had finally come utterly to reject Communism was no easy task. Not even sophistry could accomplish it. Only the psychological mechanism of "bracketing" would serve, as it had served the Left so well before with regard to Stalin's Russia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Mao's China, Fidel's Cuba, Ho's Viet Nam, Mozambique. . . . If El Salvador had to join all these, so be it. At least no one could claim that virtuous indignation had not, in the end, been preserved.

The Background

By Seymour Martin Lipset

AT A RALLY of left-wing intellectuals in support of Poland's *Solidarity*, held in New York recently, Susan Sontag created quite a stir by emphasising the similarities between fascism and Communism. She made the controversial statement: "Communism is in itself a variant, the most successful variant of fascism, fascism with a human face." And she asked why "many of us— . . . I include myself—did not understand the nature of communist tyranny", when émigrés from Communist countries had been telling them the truth for many decades. "Why didn't we informed and intelligent people hear them before, when they were telling us exactly what they tell us now?"

Susan Sontag's talk was booed by the audience. And two New York journals, *The Soho News* and *The Nation*, were prompted to publish symposia by prominent intellectual figures trying to evaluate her analysis. Most of the participants were sharply critical, attacking her for giving "aid and comfort to reaction."

I find it hard to understand how there still can be informed and intelligent people who refuse to recognise that Communism in every form is oppressive, characterised by a greater concentration of élite power than exists in any Western social system. Sontag wonders why she and her Left-wing friends "were not responding to the truth." The answer is simple: Many have been so opposed to conditions in their own society that they had to project their image of an ideal social system on to foreign soil, on to the closed world of Communism. The Soviet system with its vision of an egalitarian society has been the obvious choice for those looking for an ideal against which they can invidiously compare their own native land.

Visits to the Soviet Union, to China, to Cuba, to Viet Nam, by successive generations did not dispel the belief. Those who hated America or Britain or France were really uninterested in the way ordinary people were treated under Communism. In spite of the absolute power held by Stalin, Mao, Tito, and other leaders, and the considerable discrepancies between the ways of life of the Party élite and the Masses, they still insisted they had seen a working society dedicated to equality and freedom.

Many joined "Marxist" movements. Yet they, and the parties in which they enlisted, ignored a basic dictum laid down by Karl Marx, that economic abundance—a state of affairs which could only be reached in a highly advanced industrial society—was an essential prerequisite for socialism. Marx polemicised bitterly against Utopian socialists, people who sought to institute socialism under conditions of scarcity. In *The German Ideology*, he wrote that the high

> "development of productive forces is absolutely necessary as a practical premise [for socialism]: for the reason that without it only *want* is made general, and with *want* the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business [the German word was '*Scheisse*'] would necessarily be reproduced."

Marx emphasised that an effort to create socialism in a poor or less developed society would inevitably result in the recreation of an oppressive class-ridden social system. The martyred leader of the German Revolution of 1919, Rosa Luxemburg, also noted "that under such fatal conditions even the most gigantic idealism and the most storm-tested revolutionary energy are incapable of realising democracy and socialism but only distorted attempts at either. . . ." Unfortunately, they were right, as the history of the USSR, China, Viet Nam, and other Communist societies demonstrates.

MANY ON THE LEFT are now outraged by the suppression of *Solidarity* and the effort to create a more democratic Poland. But General Jaruzelski and his martial-law minions are only retracing the footsteps of those who crushed the movement of the Kronstadt sailors for more freedom in 1921, who killed millions in the Soviet Union in the 1930s on a scale not seen before in the modern world, who murdered Trotskyists and other leftists in Viet Nam in the 1940s and 1950s, who suppressed the

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workers' rebellion in East Germany in 1953, and who destroyed democratic movements in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968.

Supporters of the faith have been unmoved by, or unaware of Communist reliance on racism and religious bigotry. Stalin used anti-Semitism in his fight against Leon Trotsky as early as the 1920s; Jews and other minority nationalities were openly persecuted in the Soviet Union after World War II; Polish Communists repeatedly have appealed to deep-rooted anti-Semitic prejudices on many occasions from the 1950s through to the '80s; the Czech régime staged a public trial of Jews in the 1950s and continues to give voice to anti-Jewish sentiments. Currently, the Soviet Union not only restricts the access of Jews to high-level education and professions, but it continues to publish vitriolic anti-Semitic books for mass distribution. Yet many, including some Jews, have continued to support the extension of Communism to other countries, particularly to those in the Third World.

THE LINKAGE between Communism and Fascism, now emphasised by Susan Sontag, was made by Communists during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact (1939–1941). Stalin actually delivered a toast to Hitler saying: "I know how much the German people loves its *Führer*. I should, therefore, like to drink to his health." Walter Ulbricht, who was to become head of the post-War East German Communist state, wrote in a Communist publication called *Die Welt* (in February 1940) that those "who intrigue against the friendship of the German and Soviet people are enemies of the German people", and warned the German workers that if England won the War they would face "the muzzling of the workers' press, the establishment of concentration camps, and special laws against the workers." The French Communist Party applied to the Nazi occupiers of their country for permission to publish a Party newspaper in Paris, justifying the request on the grounds that they were also opposed to the "Allied imperialists." And even earlier, in 1932, the German Communists supported a Nazi-initiated referendum to vote the Social Democratic government of Prussia out of office. The Communists assumed that a Nazi régime was preferable to a Social Democratic one, since it would eliminate their socialist competitors and open the door for a subsequent Communist takeover: *Nach Hitler, uns.* In 1945, the Italian Communist Party instructed its members to "seek out every former Fascist and offer him membership in our party with a guarantee of amnesty if he joins us." And in 1981, the French Communist Party allied itself with right-wing demands that foreign immigrants be deported (Jean-François Revel noted that the party "justifies [racism] with the same arguments as the British National Front").

In a recent article, Arnold Beichman has called attention to

> "the revisionist thesis of fascism current among Soviet and Soviet-bloc social scientists. . . . According to Boris R. Lopukhov the contemporary communist view regards fascism as progressive. . . . Another Soviet theoretician, Alexander Galkin, says that fascism arose 'spontaneously' during the crisis conditions that followed the First World War. Mihaly Vadja, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, goes further in attributing to Mussolini's fascism, a 'progressive solution' to Italy's backward industrial structure. He even recommends Franz Borkenau's unorthodox Marxist interpretation of fascism as a 'transitional form of modernising dictatorship.' "

THUS, THE EVIDENCE of the similarities between Fascism and Communism has been there for a very long time. What has been missing is the willingness to recognise that Western society, including the United States, is more humane, more democratic, more open to progressive social change than any and all of the régimes that call themselves "communist." Those who have searched for an ideological justification for opposing Capitalism, in terms of a struggle between absolute good and absolute evil, obviously have great difficulties, emotional and intellectual, in admitting that Western society is better than its major "leftist" political rival.

Western society is obviously far from ideal. It is severely inegalitarian; it discriminates against various minorities; its political democracy is flawed. But the politics of moderation, of the possible, of the attainable, continues to strike ideologues as too insignificant, as unworthy. Those who have lost (or never had) a religious faith, a belief in a Kingdom of Heaven, must project an earthly paradise; and they must blind themselves to the earthly realities of that paradise.

WILL THE POLISH EVENTS end the appeal of Communism? I doubt it. The same motives that led certain intellectuals to look to Communism to improve the situation of the masses in the Soviet Union and China still generate enthused support for Communist-led movements in various less-developed countries. "Utopian socialism" remains very much a live force in the Third World, if not in the West. But once in power, the Utopians (as Marx anticipated) turn into oppressive authoritarian rulers of impoverished societies. The old exploited "masses" continue to suffer, as much or often more than in the past. Their rulers, who believe they are serving "the People's interests", are

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more inclined to use terror to foster these interests than are those who are only concerned with maintaining power. The dictatorships of Salazar, Franco, and the Greek colonels could give way to democratic régimes because they were reactionary and self-interested rather than revolutionary. Communists may not yield power because they believe they represent historic truth and ideological, virtue, not unlike the National-Socialists.

Surely the best we can do is to try to "make society better"; it will never be perfect. Those who seek Utopias are, in my view, the true culprits of the day, and this is as true for Leftists as it is for Rightists. As we have seen, the bad can be made much worse; the so-called ideal is the mortal enemy of the good.

London Commentary

Our Man in Buenos Aires

The Falklands Crisis—By EDWARD PEARCE

AT THE SCHOOL where I was educated in the North of England, Fifth and Sixth Form boys had access to a long high lectern on opposite sides of which were displayed *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* as it was then called. At the height of the Suez issue, when Anthony Eden mobilised troops to start an invasion of Egypt, we ran a modest little war of our own as the liberal element traded violent abuse and the occasional punch with the blue-to-vermilion patriots over the top of that lectern.

War makes newspapers go a bit odd, and in responding to General Galtieri's invasion of the Falkland Islands we have been quite as excitable as the American press became during the yellow-ribbon craze for the hostages in Iran. As time passes, the quarrel will take on left- and right-wing connotations (perhaps the only prophecy which can be made with reasonable safety at the moment) and we shall be swapping punches over the lectern. Yet it didn't start that way. "Have you heard the news?" I asked an old friend at a Cambridge conference we were both attending. When I told him, his response—and he is one of the most benign and douce personalities in the Parliamentary Labour Party—was, "We've got to kick the buggers out. . . ."

The emergency meeting of Parliament on Saturday, 3 April, was not too far from a Hate-In. Only two MPs (George Foulkes for Labour and Ray Whitney for the Conservatives) counselled against military action. Michael Foot, the leader of the Opposition, asked, "What had happened to our power to act? Of course Britain had a power to act. The Government must now prove by deeds, because it could never do it by words, that it was not responsible."

From both sides the meccano words of outrage were slotted into place: "infamy . . . look to us in their desperate plight . . . we should not see foul brutal aggression succeed in our world . . ." (Mr Foot); ". . . no possibility should be excluded of repossessing the islands by a combination of firm diplomacy and the use of the Navy" (David Owen, Social Democrat); "the strain on our honour—make the Argentinian dictator disgorge . . ." (Julian Amery, Conservative).

As for the press, *The Times* proclaimed "*We Are All Falklanders Now*" in the headline of a leader, which was just as well since the headline of a *Times* feature a few days before had spoken of "*These Paltry Islands which Divide Us.*" But we had reached Monday, and Galtieri had moved in on the previous Friday. So we were "an island race" and should "never send to know for whom the bell tolls"; but apparently it was tolling for the Argentinians.

There was a whole lot more—very little else, come to think of it. Breathless stories from Portsmouth where the flotilla was being put in order, accounts of the weddings of sailors and their sweethearts, pictures of the royal prince who was going as a helicopter pilot and (on the front page of the passionate *Daily Mail*) a disagreeable picture of captured British marines lying face down under guard and above it the caption: "SURRENDER: *A moment the marines have vowed to revenge.*" Lord Hill-Norton, former Chief of the Defence Staff, was quoted as saying, "If nobody will leave then we should land our troops to kick them off." And from the United States came the voice of Henry Fairlie, the former British journalist, speaking "for the British colony here": "Your Majesty, your loyal subjects here are ready, a small contingent, but

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with our rusted swords, last used at Marston Moor in defence of the Crown, already taken from the wall." As I said, in crises newspapers go a bit odd!

WRITING AS I DO when the conflict has not been resolved, for a publication date when perhaps we shall have a victory with historic implications, or when the *Sheffield*, itself tragedy enough, may have been followed by heaven knows what worse imaginable cases, or when we may have a victory which leaves too many of the enemy dead for minds to be quiet, or when "the force of world opinion" has induced frail spirits to weasel out (and the weasels will all be wearing pale blue UN helmets), prophecy is not smart. We may have suffered the bitter self-humiliation of Suez or we may, by sheer nerve, have achieved an anti-Suez. It will have been an incomparably better cause and, God willing, it may have been the necessary victory which we hope for. In spite of dismay at the sulphurous bombast of the first week of the crisis, one hopes for that victory. But any discussion of what actually happens in the South Atlantic would have to be in the past conditional tense, describing what *we may perhaps have done*—not the most fruitful of approaches.

Meanwhile, as the large War party and the smaller but even more virulent Peace party continue to swap punches over the lectern, perhaps we should consider what has already happened and the knock-on political effect.

KIPLING REMARKED of the Second Boer War,

> *We have had no end of a lesson*
> *It will do us no end of good.*

Well, one hopes that this won't be another three-year engagement and that we learn more than Kitchener and Douglas Haig did. But the real lesson has been for the Foreign Office, which is going through the most soul-shrivelling trauma imaginable in the year of its bicentenary.

Of all Mrs Thatcher's ministers, Lord Carrington had looked the most castellated in security. A slim-line buddha with a faint trace of a smirk, he had been the master-manipulator of the Rhodesian crisis; he it was (as we were once told by the late Robert McKenzie) who when tight money became too unbearable would take the Prime Minister by the elbow and say "Margaret, enough is enough", thereby indicating that she could change her policy or depart. Carrington stands today at rough parity with Carthage. No praise for the honour of his resignation gets past the fact that master-manipulation over the Falkland Islands got us into the sort of mess which only guns and the threat of more guns will get us out of.

FOR THE FOREIGN OFFICE itself had made very little secret of its exasperation with the Falklanders and of its preoccupation with good Anglo-Argentinian relations. They were subtle at the FO: they were sophisticated and grown-up. They were very bright. Had they been any less so, this crisis would never have occurred. For consider: although the Argentine enjoys propinquity to the Falklands and can get at them easily, it is overwhelmingly unlikely that any occupant of the *Casa Rosada*—Videla, Viola, Galtieri (whichever was the flavour-of-the-month)—would have undertaken an invasion if the British had been crude, dogged, loyal, and uncomplicatedly given to sticking up for their dependencies. Simple-minded rectitude would not have been misunderstood.

An invasion was thinkable precisely because the sort of Englishmen whom the Argentinians dealt with were long-sighted, interested in good trade and commerce, and deeply sceptical about irrational sentiments of nationalism. It is not seriously denied that the FO regarded the Falklands as a thoroughgoing nuisance, to be disposed of, if possible. So conversations with General Galtieri's Ministers were apparently about ways of doing it which would accommodate the parties involved. Sale and leaseback (a favourite of the property market) seems to have been the recommended device. But precisely such unstrident and civil views of the problem invited the assumption that it could hardly matter to the British enough to make them resist a snatch.

We occupied the worst of all possible worlds. Had we told the Argentinians that we were not in business for a trade-off and would resist with arms any attempt to use force, force would not have been

Translation

Buenos Aires

The name of the Canning underground railway station in Buenos Aires has been altered to "April 2" in an outburst of national rejoicing over the military takeover of the Falkland Islands on that day.

The English names of schools, colleges, shops and restaurants are also being changed. Many fee-paying British schools in BA, where places are assiduously sought by ambitious parents, are changing their English names to the Spanish equivalent.

In Mar del Plata, the "Little English" shop is now "Little Indian." And after 90 years, the "Franco-Inglesa Pharmacy" has dropped the "Inglesa."

One is, however, happy to report there are no plans yet to change the name of the William Shakespeare School to the Guillermo Shakespeare. "He was quite a good writer", conceded a spokesman.

DAILY MAIL

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used. Had we been ruthlessly soft instead of soft in the fair-minded and gentlemanly way we prefer, the Falklanders would have been told that time was up, grants for resettlement in New Zealand or Westmorland were available, and British responsibility would end on Day X in 1983.

In fairness to the Foreign Office, for whom one feels some sympathy, they didn't (so far as the evidence shows) offer to rat in this sharp, incisive fashion. In consequence, the Argentinians thought they had nothing to fear while at the same time remaining frustrated of getting the islands by agreement. They have now broken international law, but the Foreign Office seems to have unwittingly indicated that the law was unenforceable. Somehow one feels that poker is a game to be cultivated in Carlton Gardens. Bluff, if it is not to collapse, should not come in containers marked BLUFF.

The mistake once made, the first victim was not Lord Carrington, but the whole Foreign Office and with it "the FO view." This had been pragmatic, melancholy, highly skilled, but excessively founded on what A. E. Housman called "the sure foundation of despair." Mrs Thatcher does not like the Foreign Office; she has found them gentle, assured, maddeningly unassailable in their traditional certainties. Their world of half-tints and forward-bought compromises irks her, and they in turn find her simplistic (though the word is too crude for their tastes), too Manichean, and over-valiant for that dubious entity, truth.

AT THAT SAME Cambridge conference a young Conservative MP said when he heard the news, "She will be furious. *God!* She will be furious! . . ."

She was. And it is a fury best not encountered. But more to the point, almost everybody else was furious, to the point where anything less than an immediate launch of an Armada, towards a place few people could have found on the world map the day before, would have prevented an immediate Government crisis. The Conservatives, at the very moment when their long-unpopular economic policies were truly showing the crocus signs of spring—in exports, productivity, industrial relations, and business confidence—found themselves impaled in the one area, that of Foreign Affairs, thought to be either too well run or too unimportant ever to cause any harm. Life had suddenly become very simplistic indeed, not to say downright gaunt. Part-measures and acceptable concessions were stripped away in an afternoon to the bare sharp-edged necessity of standing up and resisting. It was like Roy Campbell's account of Winter:

> *Winter, the paragon of art,*
> *That kills all forms of life and feeling*
> *Save what is pure and will survive.*

What survived for us was the elemental attitudes of angry, affronted people who for 20 years had taken a vast amount of abuse, and worse, with a stoicism which the generality of us did not always hear. As Dr Kissinger has perceived, "perpetual defeat is unendurable", and it is General Leopoldo Galtieri's mere parenthetical misfortune to be a white, right-wing, military man. That fact unravelled complications for my Labour friends. If it were in the bounds of theology or geography for Julius Nyerere—landlocked, black and good—to have seized some of our last islands, the British Left's brief fascinating lurch into the reflexes of W. E. Henley would never have occurred. As it was, the message came sweetly: *nihil obstat.*

As for the public, which does not worry about this sort of thing, it showed every sign of intense approval in its first reactions with putting an end to sophistication and making a new start to the invigorating practice of bopping people. Very crude, very deplorable; but, as I say, we have taken a lot: from EOKA in Cyprus shooting soldiers in the back to the latest back-street murders in Ulster. As once bidden by Mr Tom Mboya, we have scrammed out of Africa and watched the kleptocracies and thanatocracies take over. In our stupid unreachable British way we have felt the sentiment expressed by Lord Melbourne, that "all the clever fellows were wrong and all the damn fools were right." Maybe the South Atlantic on the eve of the southern hemisphere's winter and its awful seas wasn't quite the place for it but you could sum up the British attitude as a feeling, beyond all remonstrance, that we ought to lay one on somebody out there somewhere, and that the military dictator of the Argentine might do very nicely.

The clever fellows, of course, were all in the Foreign Office. The best of them thought commercially and had wanted a malted-milk foreign policy for reasons which were at least decently self-interested. Others seemed to unsophisticated onlookers to be more foreign than office in their passion for accommodating other people's points of view. They were suspected of meddling in Ulster, which they are further suspected of wanting to treat like Aden.

If such suspicions were unfair or irrational, the FO had nobody but itself to blame since its one great defect of sensitivity and intelligence-gathering was in relation to the British public. Regarding it as a mob, it missed the never-quite-voiced-but-always-present view, transcending class and party among the British, that "the rest of the world", with a few admired or affectionately regarded exceptions (say the Japanese and the Norwegians), is a *global* mob and not greatly regarded. Nor did they share, or seem to share, the British affection for Britain and the British weariness at the excesses of our recent official humilities. Now, contempt for foreigners is plain silly, but a decent self-esteem is not; and with

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whatever degree of unfairness, the Foreign Office was perceived not to share it.

In consequence of eschewing any power-political force at all, we have been driven by an insult too crude and a demonstration of our weakness too painful into throwing about 70% of all our conventional armed strength at the handsome profile of General Galtieri.

ALL OF Mrs Thatcher's enemies rejoiced to see her painted into a corner from which only the success of a wild throw created by public and parliamentary anger can rescue her. In the bitchy way of politicians, those who are out, both Labour and Conservative, are building their own Cabinets in Spain; and all this at a time when the important indicators and the stock market were suggesting that the thing which matters, the economy, was about to come right. The costs of a sustained South Atlantic blockade could wreck that. Anger of her own and the necessity conjured up by the anger of others have turned Mrs Thatcher into a War Lady. One's own Cobdenite preoccupation with boring, unbloody old things like trade and solvency pulls against the national mood. A desire that neither this Government (which has been braver and better than most) nor Britain (which is us, the people of Britain) should suffer humiliation, pulls with that mood.

If we should get out of this one—and please God that we do—perhaps the Foreign Office, whom I regard with less malice than most, will remember something which George Orwell wrote: "I do not desire my country to humiliate others, nor do I desire it to be humiliated. . . ."

Letter from Paris

American Dominoes

By Raymond Aron

Paris

AT THE conclusion of the recent Franco-German summit meeting, the two governments declared that "genuine non-alignment is in keeping with this objective"—namely progress and justice, and hence world peace—"and that is why they oppose transferring the East-West conflict into the Third World. . . ." This phrase undoubtedly owed its origin to the French delegation, since it echoes remarks made by the French Foreign Minister in other circumstances; for example, in an interview published in *Newsweek* he stated: "Was there really a Soviet influence in Central America a year or two ago? I think not." The President's own adviser, M. Régis Debray, might enlighten the Foreign Minister on this point.

In the absence of that expert view, the facts are clear enough to refute this curious assertion, for two or three years ago we saw Castroist influence "transferring the East-West conflict" straight into Central America. To exclude from the battlefield of East-West confrontation a region of the world—Central America—which is open both to Fidelistas and to Yankees alike means either deceiving Western public opinion, or deceiving oneself.

Official French spokesmen would certainly argue in reply that the revolutionaries of El Salvador and Guatemala are moved, not by a Marxist-Leninist faith, but by their hatred of despotic régimes, and of oligarchies which more or less monopolise the earth and its riches. The right approach, according to this line of argument, is first of all to reform the social conditions which produce rebellion and then, supposing that the rebels gain the day, to turn them away from the Soviet model and the Soviet camp.

CONSIDER FOR A MOMENT the premises of this argument. In almost every nation of Central America, guerrilla rebellion is either a potential or an actual hazard.

Once civil war has begun, reformism no longer works, or rather it works in the one direction of accelerating the fall of the national state under threat. The Iran of the late Shah gave a further demonstration of this simple axiom. Reckoned on the scale of our Western values, the Khomeini régime looks worse in every respect than the régime which we used rightly to accuse of violating human rights.

Yes, comes the answer, but you can't say the same of Central America. Surely the Sandinista régime has to be considered preferable to Somoza's, for the people of Nicaragua. Will it not teach the peasants to read and write and will it not give them a sense of identity and self-respect? That may be so, and I refrain from giving any categorical verdict. But whatever the truth of such

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an assessment, the Sandinista régime has already gone a long way down the road which leads to the one-party state and to the Fidelista version of the Soviet system in Latin America.

Just as in Castro's Cuba, the leaders of the revolution have lost no time in organising an army at least three times the size of Somoza's; they, too, keep their country and its population heavily policed; they, too, are loud in their approval of Kremlin diplomacy, be it in Afghanistan or in Poland. The French, who hope to lure them back into the Western camp by the sale of arms, are once again failing to understand the mentality of the grandchildren of Lenin.

ALL RIGHT, it may be said, let us admit the possibility that Nicaragua is already beyond recovery. That doesn't mean that we should throw in the towel. The Soviet Union sends lavish shipments of arms, but not much else. The Sandinistas might preserve some element of freedom in the hope of receiving American dollars. In fact they have already received some US aid, and have immediately spent a lot of it on their new army.

In El Salvador, it will be argued, the die is not yet cast. Perhaps some kind of a political settlement would avoid a civil war that the government seems incapable of winning.

Here again, I shall refrain from pronouncing on behalf of any one of the various strategies which are being put before President Reagan. The worst strategy, in any case, is obviously the one used: United States support for President Napoleon Duarte has not been great enough to ensure success for the Junta, and not small enough for the possible insurgent victory to be seen as anything but an American defeat. Useful or not, the recent elections will not put an end to the civil war.

The alternative argument runs: By automatically casting the El Salvador rebels as enemies, the United States are pushing them into the arms of the Soviet Union. If they were to put pressure on the Junta to negotiate with the "Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation", they might be able to prevent the radicalisation of the Front; and in the worst event they would maintain tolerable relations with the new masters.

I doubt whether the Latin American nations—Costa Rica, Honduras, and further southward Venezuela and Colombia, where representative institutions do after all survive—are likely to be persuaded by this calculation, which amounts to gambling on good American manners being endearing enough to convert Communist minds and hearts. Today a generation of Fidelista revolutionaries is dragging Central America and the whole of Latin America into the mainstream of world history, in other words "into the East-West conflict."

Perhaps the French Foreign Minister would have no strong feeling either way about the prospect of Fidelism spreading into Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico. The friends of the West whom I met on a recent visit to Caracas think altogether differently. In private conversation and in public interviews, spokesmen for the French government have been promulgating *à bout de souffle* the notion that the Soviet Union has "shot its bolt", and that only the unreconstructed Cold Warriors are losing any sleep about the Russian menace. James Reston has readily and complacently echoed this assessment in his criticisms of the Reagan *équipe*.

IT IS, IN MY VIEW, an outlandish interpretation of the present state of affairs. The East-West conflict spares not one region of the world, and especially not an increasingly de-stabilised Central America and the Caribbean. If Mexico succumbs some day to the revolutionary tidal wave, the world geopolitical map will be in tatters. The United States, compelled to defend an indefensible frontier, will lose the privilege of a superpower's insularity, and "the enemy" will already be considered to be inside the gates, among the millions of Mexican immigrants, both legal and illegal. Falling dominoes indeed!

Walkabout

These solipsists plugged into themselves,
they mean the end of society as we know it.
The bridles of stethoscopes have been thrown
over their heads—stereophonic, naturally. . . .
They move tamely to the jungle-beat of their hearts,
the personalised rhythm of life-support systems,
the bump and grind of a silent collective.

Michael Hofmann

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A Special Book Section

Literature & Criticism

In the Labyrinth

The Borges Phenomenon—By JAMES NEILSON

"'Don Quixote'", Menard told me, "was above all else an entertaining book: but now it has become an occasion for patriotic toasts, for grammatical insolence, for obscene de luxe editions. Glory is a form of incomprehension and it is perhaps the very worst."

"Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" *from* LABYRINTHS

WHEN JORGE LUIS BORGES wrote that, in the early 1940s, he was already known in Argentina as a poet fond of peculiar metaphors, a fierce literary polemicist, and the author of some strange short stories that looked like essays but were, despite the academic apparatus seemingly embedded in them, exercises in fantasy. He was not considered a likely candidate for "glory." True, as early as 1933 Drieu La Rochelle had reported after a trip to Buenos Aires that "*Borges vaut le voyage.*" But, this and other omens notwithstanding, Borges was still the private passion of a few, most of whom knew him personally. And even they did not, for the most part, take him very seriously. Although he was obviously, ostentatiously, clever and sensitive, he struck most of his readers then as a literary prankster whose main ambition was to concoct complicated jokes in order to discomfit Argentina's solemn academic community. He seemed too wayward to be considered a "significant" writer. The idea that he, of all the many talented individuals then writing in Argentina, would acquire world-wide fame would have seemed as absurd as any of his own metaphysical propositions.

It was not until 1961, when Borges had already written most of the books he is now so well known for (*A Universal History of Infamy*, 1935; *A History of Eternity*, 1936; *Labyrinths*, 1944; *The Aleph and Other Stories*, 1949; *Other Inquisitions*, 1952; and *Dreamtigers*, 1960) that his reputation overflowed Buenos Aires and penetrated into every city in the Western world. That year Borges, who was already a sexagenarian, shared the Prix Formentor with Samuel Beckett and, with astonishing speed, became the centre of a cult whose adepts were especially numerous in the academic institutions whose practices he had gently mocked. The works that he wrote after being "discovered" are, by general agreement, inferior to those he wrote when he still belonged to Buenos Aires. But, although his powers progressively waned, his fame has not yet ceased to grow. Borgesian studies, once the preserve of a handful of devotees in communication with the master, have expanded into a sizable industry. And, inevitably, imitators soon began to appear, busying themselves with turning out enigmatic tales concerning labyrinths, mirrors, tigers, résumés of non-existent treatises, and all the other features of the Borgesian universe.

Borges himself, alarmed by this horde of intruders looting his private world, abandoned it and took refuge in Argentina's past or in Anglo-Saxon verse and Icelandic sagas, where few of his admirers have been brash enough to follow him. "I've grown so tired of labyrinths and mirrors and tigers and all that sort of thing, especially when others use them", he explained to the Argentine writer César Fernández Moreno. "That's the advantage of imitators. They cure you: so many people are doing what I did that it is no longer necessary for me to do it myself."

The enthusiasm of the world-wide Borgesian fraternity may be irksome to Borges, but its activities are unobtrusive when compared to those of his compatriots after they realised that they had an internationally acclaimed literary master in their midst. In Argentina Borges has become, like Cervantes' great *boutade* in Spain, an excuse for innumerable patriotic toasts. Last year he even suffered the indignity of being described (by a general, no less) as a "national monument"—a curious tribute to a despiser of statuary who professes to regard the nation-state as an anachronism and has fought a lifelong guerrilla campaign against nationalists. None the less, he is

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regularly raised aloft like a martial trophy by Argentines who rarely read any books but who are infuriated by the Swedish Academy's refusal to give their man the Nobel Prize. "Obscene de luxe editions" of his works have also appeared, as though to complete the humiliation he presaged. "Glory", in fact, has taken possession of him. His personal life today is a triumphal progress from city to city as an "ambassador of Argentine culture" on whom are bestowed a succession of literary awards (some of them enviably generous), honorary degrees, and "homages", banquets at which he is obliged to listen to well-meaning but, like the general's remark, often pompous praise.

These traditional tokens of the world's esteem for a recognised creator grown very old would, one might think, have been quite enough for a man who had spent most of his life in deliberate obscurity. But our age has devised additional indignities for men of great achievement and, in Argentina at any rate, Borges has become a media celebrity who rubs shoulders in the popular imagination with starlets, singers, soccer players and politicians. His impassive face, now and then illumined by a weary smile, gazes from television screens and the shiny pages of magazines with disconcerting frequency. Interviews with him, descriptions of him, and foreigners' articles about him—often abbreviated and sometimes oddly similar to the pastiches he once wrote—fill columns of daily, weekly, and monthly publications that range from the serious to the salaciously trivial. Some of the interviews are so extensive that they are issued as special supplements. In them are chronicled Borges's opinions about anything that may be of urgent interest to his fellow Argentines if not to Borges himself: American foreign policy, the military régime's treatment of dissidents, the state of the Argentine peso.

THE CREATION *ex nihilo*, as it were, of a revered sage by the world's collective imagination could easily have been a story by Borges:

> "I am not, either. I dreamed the world the way you dreamed your work, my Shakespeare: one of the forms of my dream was you, who, like me, are many and no one."

Borges is, after all, more acutely aware than most people of the whimsical relationship between a man's public reputation and his private self, or what he assumes, out of habit, is his private self. The writer, Borges believes, is created by the reader out of the materials that happen to be available, and he has always argued that reading is just as creative as writing. Many of the people who regard him with awe have not, moreover, read more than a few words of what he has written: their belief that he is important owes everything to the admiration of others who have. But in the Borgesian universe misunderstanding is an aspect of human consciousness and a basic premise of most thought. Reality is an act of faith. What better illustration of this than the metamorphosis of a secretive practitioner of minor genres into one of the best-known writers on earth, a member of that small and inscrutably selected company of men who, like Ernest Hemingway and Jean-Paul Sartre, come to mean something (although exactly what is not always easy to tell) to millions of people who usually treat literature with robust disdain?

Ever since attaining the rank of "celebrity" Borges has insisted that he is bewildered by all the attentions that are paid him. This is in part, no doubt, a calculated stance: extravagant humility about the value of his work is an important facet of his "image." Thanks to it he can enjoy, as he manifestly does enjoy, being lionised by people who often know nothing about what he has written while laughing to himself at such a preposterous situation. He is, in his way, keeping his options open, preparing himself for oblivion or glory by affecting to be indifferent to either. It is an engaging approach that has, needless to say, contributed to his fame. But it is not simply a social pose adopted for a new situation. Scepticism about the value of what he has written lies at the heart of his literary method.

Borges treats his work as though it were a long (but not very long: his *Collected Works*, published by Emecé Editores in 1974, contain little more than a thousand pages) novel. Its central character—its sole character—is Jorge Luis Borges, a figment only the innocent will confuse with the retiring, affable gentleman to be found walking along a street in Buenos Aires, delivering a lecture to fur-clad ladies, receiving a substantial literary prize or giving an interview. In an epilogue to this edition, Borges donned the mask of a Chilean literary historian writing a century later:

> "The renown Borges enjoyed during his life, documented by a heap of monographs and controversies, can only astonish us today. It is attested that nobody was more astonished than Borges himself and that he always feared he would be declared a fraud or a botcher or a singular mixture of the two."

Borges, of course, is no fraud. How could he be? It is not as though he has ever claimed that his work had any special significance: if others choose to think it is of overwhelming importance, that is their business. If George Steiner, for example, pronounces "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" "one of the sheer wonders of human contrivance", a "spare fable" in which "the several facets of Borges's shy genius are almost wholly crystallised", who is Borges to object? And if

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Vladimir Nabokov complains (about a writer called Osberg): "At first Véra and I were delighted by reading him. We felt we were on a portico, but we have learned there was no house", that is equally satisfactory. Has Borges ever pretended that there was a house attached to his finely-wrought portico?

BORGES IS NO BOTCHER, either. He has always been a most careful craftsman, making version after version of his stories, essays, and poems, and sending them to the printer with notable reluctance: he once suggested that if it were not for the importunity of publishers he would never finish anything. And when he writes he weighs the words he uses, fingering them for hours before deciding whether to use or discard them. He has always worried about form. For all his ritualistic modesty, he is a very serious and deliberate writer indeed.

His technical skill, his intelligence, his imaginativeness, cannot be doubted. His work—he characteristically refuses to call it an *oeuvre*—is all well-made. Much of it is brilliant. And it is unique: no other writer in our civilisation has ever produced anything like it. But he does present a problem. For all his ingenuity, is his work not too outlandish, too arbitrary, too narrow to bear the huge edifice of his reputation? Is he anything more than an inventor of novelties? The containers he has devised are undeniably intriguing, but are their contents worth taking seriously? They probably are, although not quite so seriously as some Borgesians would have it; but before the arguments for the defence are put forward it is useful to consider Borges's extraordinary limitations. Certainly, there can be few other writers of comparable stature who have so consistently excluded the principal preoccupations of their age from their work.

His disregard for conventional genres is striking enough: Borges has written no novels, no dramas, no "major" poems, no long biographical or critical works, no philosophical treatises. He has also, and this is even more remarkable, loftily ignored almost all the themes that, taken together, are the very stuff of modern literature. He has told us almost nothing about sexual relationships, social mores, political ideologies, or the texture of "real life." He has shown no interest in nature: his settings are as bleak and airless as a painting by de Chirico. He has also refused to recognise the individual personality: not one of his "characters", Borges apart, comes near to possessing an autonomous existence, and he has made no effort at all to satisfy this frequent demand on creative artists. Borges, in other words, seems to belong to an as yet unknown literary tradition that is quite different from the one we are familiar with and in which most of us live our intellectual lives.

This would have been easily understandable had Borges been a "primitive", driven to originality by his ignorance. But Borges is anything but a "primitive" in this sense: he is as aware of, and as knowledgeable about, a dozen literary traditions as any man of his generation. Nevertheless, he has chosen to overlook most of what has been written since his childhood in Europe or America. Although he is familiar with Joyce and Proust, Kafka and Virginia Woolf (whom he translated), he has always been most affected by the authors whose books lined the shelves of his father's substantial private library: Browne, De Quincey, Coleridge, Spencer, Shaw, Wells, Kipling, Stevenson, Chesterton, and the scholars who wrote articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the source of much of his notorious erudition. And it is to them that he most often returns.

HIS FATHER, Jorge Borges, was a professor of English, and English was the first language the young Jorge Luis learned to read. Jorge Borges was clearly an unusual paterfamilias for his time: he let his son read whatever he liked, untroubled by the thought that it might be "too old" for him. So in addition to tackling weighty tomes that would test most university graduates, young Borges was also permitted to read Sir Richard Burton's "pornographic" translation of the *Arabian Nights*, which he did with enormous pleasure, skipping over the dull and incomprehensible erotic passages to get to the magical episodes that fascinated him. These adventures apart, it was a safe, comfortable household, made disturbing only by its many mirrors. Borges looked into them with horror; could it be that only he existed? That was the origin of one of his favourite images. There, too, it occurred to him that the universe might well be a vast library with all knowledge available to the person who knew just where to look. And he was still a small child when the tiger, leaping out at him from some volume about travels in India, became his favourite symbol for destruction, for time.

The labyrinth, perhaps the most famous of all the Borgesian metaphors, came to him much later. But perhaps it was germinating then too: certainly Buenos Aires, huge, recently contrived, and strangely repetitive with many streets almost replicas of others, seems more labyrinthine than most other cities. While still a child, moreover, he heard tales about the swaggering cut-throats, murderously and sometimes suicidally devoted to their own punctilious code, who lurked nearby. The bookish boy—and the unworldly man—rarely came into contact with them, so in his imagination they became epic heroes, elemental and wild like the heroes of the Norse sagas.

Most important of all for him, it was in his parents' house that he developed his interest in metaphysical speculation as a game, at once

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serious and unserious. This concern—which is as common among bright schoolboys as admiration for gangsters—was encouraged by a frequent visitor, Macedonio Fernández, a great talker whose witty paradoxes and curious fancies had a considerable influence on Argentine literature but who, unfortunately, was an indifferent writer.

It is not unusual for a writer's work to take an embryonic shape during his childhood. But few writers can have added so little afterwards as Borges. His later experiences, such as an adolescence spent in Europe (mainly Switzerland where the Borges family were trapped by the Great War, and Spain, where Borges, then a young man, found many congenial literary companions), contributed relatively little. He added two more writers, Whitman and Schopenhauer, to his mentors while in Geneva. The many others he read did not make any enduring impression. For Borges, to many the most "modern" of writers, 20th-century literature has not been very important. His intellectual background is the 19th century. This helps account for the peculiar flavour of so much of his work. In the 19th century, scholarship was less specialised and more speculative than it is today. It was closer to literature. And when it concerned the civilisations of Asia it had something of the air of a voyage of discovery through strange lands.

Borges's father was blind for some time before he died in 1938, and in several early poems Borges seems to sense that he too would go blind one day. At Christmas in the year his father died Borges struck his head on a window frame while climbing up a dark stairway. Complications ensued and he almost died. But, although he became healthy again—and he remains a remarkably healthy man—his sight began to fail, until by his sixties he was unable to read at all, even with the aid of a magnifying glass. For many decades, therefore, he has had to rely on a succession of friends and acquaintances willing to read to him and write for him. This naturally affected his work and he has written almost as much in collaboration with others, notably his lifelong friend Adolfo Bioy Casares, as he has by himself. But the effect was, in so far as can be judged, rather less than might have been expected. His blindness, the "luminous haze" in which he was condemned to live most of his life, pushed him further back into himself, away from the surrounding world, but it did not lead to any drastic change of direction. The stories he had written before 1938 were disembodied: the ones he wrote later are ethereal. His already claustrophobic universe became even more closed in. The walls surrounding him were made higher. But he had already started to build them.

BORGES'S FAME has little to do with his verse, striking as some of it is. And it does not owe much to his stories about his martial ancestors, gauchos, and knifefighters from the less reputable suburbs of Buenos Aires. Like most of his essays, biographical or exegetical, about other writers, they are widely read because they are by Borges and not because they are irresistibly interesting themselves. His reputation rests mainly on his "fictions"—short stories, some little more than a paragraph in length, that often masquerade as scholarly essays and concern ideas rather than people—and on his genuine essays dealing with such familiar topics as Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise; the implications of infinity (if every possible combination of letters were written down and stored in an infinite library, would not all knowledge, past, present, and future, be contained in it?) and the Eternal Recurrence; the nature of time; of death; of reality. Some of these essays, moreover, consist of quotations from other writers to which Borges has appended some cursory comments.

His preferred themes, then, are those that have troubled many thoughtful people in many places for thousands of years. They are the commonplaces of speculative philosophy. But, since the decline of religious fervour among the educated in our civilisation, most Westerners have dismissed the questions they raise—questions which have never been solved—as unanswerable, and therefore barely worth asking, by the time they reached their middle twenties, returning to them later rarely unless they were drunk, seriously ill, or overcome by a religious experience. In some Eastern societies, however, they have continued to be taken quite seriously, and respectable men can devote their lives to pondering them without fear of being regarded as excessively odd: one of the main objections to "Western materialism" in these countries is our refusal to let ultimate questions preoccupy us. It is therefore no coincidence that Borges's rise to his present position in the intellectual world has occurred at a time when many Westerners, disillusioned with their civilisation and dissatisfied with the tacit agreement to overlook the unproven nature of the axioms on which it is based, have begun to treat "the wisdom of the East" with more deference than was once the case.

OF COURSE, Borges is not the first Western writer to decline to take anything for granted. Bishop Berkeley was as solipsistic as Borges, and Borges acknowledges his debt to him. Among the Romantics a refusal to accept without question the facile distinction habitually made between illusion and reality was something of a stock-in-trade. Western cities have always had their fringe communities of occultists, theosophists, and other students of the esoteric to whom most of Borges's assertions would have seemed perfectly obvious, although their members would have been

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disconcerted by his manner of presenting them. But Borges differs from his literary predecessors, just as he differs from the intense gentlemen who think they have almost understood the inner workings of the universe as a result of their careful study of the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. He has always kept both his feet planted firmly on the safe terrain of common sense even when his mind has invaded more mystical realms. He has been able to perform this feat thanks to his famous irony, by constantly implying that he does not really believe his own heterodox conclusions: they are the fancies of the writer Borges, who is, after all, merely an invention of Borges.

Significantly, what is perhaps the most quoted paragraph in his entire work is an eloquent, although peculiar, affirmation of what he has spent so much effort rebutting:

> "And yet, and yet—To deny temporal succession, to deny the ego, to deny the astronomical universe are apparent desperations and secret assuagements. . . . Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a mirror that carries me away, but I am the river; it is a tiger that tears at me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire that consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, alas, is real; I, alas, am Borges."

For the dedicated Borgesian, convinced that the master had succeeded in "refuting time" yet again, this surrender, mitigated only by "apparent", was surely distressing. But Borges the writer has, for many decades, laboured hard to dam time and thereby to win immortality, and it would not be very difficult for that Borgesian to convince himself that this unseemly dash back to orthodoxy was just an artful decoy placed to mislead pursuers: the real Borges, in so far as one can be said to exist, could make good his escape.

EVERYONE HAS his own Borges, taking from him what he wants for his own purposes, and discarding the rest. For most Argentines he is a totem and an entertainer. For some he is the teller of oddly abstract tales set in almost mythical periods of their national past, a celebrator of military achievements by their compatriots during and after the Wars of Independence, a poet of their streets and patios, a defender of their native idiom against the pedants who would subject them to the linguistic hegemony of Castile. What is probably his most savage essay is not directed against Adolf Hitler or his Argentine admirers, but against an unfortunate Spaniard, Dr Américo Castro, who dared to suggest that Platine Spanish had become corrupt.

For such Latin American writers as Octavio Paz and Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Borges is the genius who stripped away ornate Hispanic rhetoric from their written language, providing them with an instrument as fine as French and almost as flexible as English, and who freed them from the obligation to compile "realistic" committed novels about their own societies. Since Borges showed them that fantasy was respectable, few serious Latin American writers have looked back: for the last twenty years fantasy has been the predominant mode and it is the principal characteristic of most translated Latin American works. Here and there adherents of slightly more earthbound creeds like Marxism raise their voices in protest, deriding Borges as a cosmopolitan aesthete unconcerned with the very real sufferings of the unprivileged; but as the best-known cultivators of fantasy include such left-wing revolutionaries as Garcia Márquez and Julio Cortázar, their protests are made in vain. Another person who saw Borges as a laughing liberator was François Mauriac, who congratulated Borges for routing the naturalist rearguard in Latin America, and hoped that the same exploit would soon be repeated in France.

For American academics Borges is a copious source of thesis-fodder, the creator of texts that can be analysed in a great many rewarding ways. For young people unafraid of literature he is a teacher and guide who takes seriously, in his fashion, the philosophical problems they feel are more urgent than their placid elders, reconciled to this universe, care to appreciate. He also caters, in a very superior manner, to their appetite for "alternative realities" and unorthodox explanations of man's circumstances, a taste that is more commonly satisfied by H. Rider Haggard, Carlos Castañeda, and the producers of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Perhaps a thesis has already been written about the parallels between Borges's work and that of the comic-strip artists: if not, one certainly could be.

FOR ME—and I confess that I probably have more in common with this last category of Borges's admirers than I care to admit—Borges is a writer who has effected a conjunction of Western and Eastern thought. Unlike other writers who have used Eastern settings and have even sought to describe Eastern personalities, but none the less take some basic Western assumptions for granted, Borges, no matter where he places his stories or what names he gives the insubstantial creatures that populate them, implies assumptions that would be banal enough if found in an old Chinese or Japanese tale but are astonishingly novel in a writer so knowingly aware of much Western thought.

Thus Borges's fiction, like some of his essays, has a striking similarity to the writings of Taoist monks and Zen masters. He assumes, for example, that everyday reality is not reality at all and that, at best, it may offer some clues to what lies beneath or

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beyond. For him, as for them, the perceptible universe is a hopelessly complex riddle, and was probably fashioned the way it is to keep men guessing and encourage some to make a futile attempt to understand it. Like them, he treats linear time as a delusion, a convenience that is a barrier to understanding rather than a bridge: the theme of time, of the unrenounceable duty to try to foil it, is a stream that runs obsessively through his work, breaking to the surface in most of his fragments. Like the Taoists he is uneasily conscious of the transience of this dreamlike world, and he has sometimes repeated Chuang Tzu:

> "I dreamed I was a butterfly flitting from flower to flower. Then I awoke. Am I now a man who dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly who is now dreaming that it is a man?"

This alarming possibility was made explicit in one of his best-known stories, "The Circular Ruins", in which an Indian mystic who had tried to create another man "by dreaming him with meticulous integrity" discovered, "with humiliation, with terror", that he was merely the dream of another. Even the individual personality, a concept that is dear to most of us and which is fundamental to our civilisation, is treated by Borges with a disdain worthy of a Taoist monk, in flight from all earthly impediments, as a haphazard assortment of perceptions, forever changing and impossible to grasp. In accordance with this he refuses to accept responsibility for statements made many years ago: *that* Borges was another person.

Borges did not, of course, acquire his point of view after a long sojourn in the East or after any systematic study of Eastern works. He never sat at the feet of any Oriental sage. It came from promptings by such impeccably Western writers as De Quincey, Coleridge, Bishop Berkeley, and Schopenhauer, although Arthur Waley certainly made him more aware than he might have been of the close affinity between his thought and that of the Far East. In the last few years, however, his identification with the East has become increasingly explicit. He is now trying his hand at writing haiku, is working on a book of translations from the Japanese (with the help of a Japanese-speaking collaborator), and recently returned from a five-week visit to Japan. In February, moreover, Borges announced to his fellow countrymen:

> "To me Japan seems a superior civilisation. I have the hope that the East will save us because the West is in decline. I am not speaking just of ourselves, but also of the United States—a country I am very fond of, as well—because I believe it is in complete decadence."

Borges's assertion, needless to say, had nothing to do with Japan's remarkable economic achievements. What most impressed him was the large number of people who wrote verse.

BORGES'S ADMIRATION for Japan is unlikely to bring him the trouble his earlier admirations for England and the United States provoked. Argentine self-confidence has collapsed in the last few years: praise of foreign countries, which are tacitly contrasted favourably with one's own, is not the crime it once was. In fact Borges seems, at 82, to be winning his long argument with the nationalists intent on keeping the outside world at bay. When attacked for his "cosmopolitanism", he often responded that an ability to take what is wanted from other countries without discomfort is one of the most valuable characteristics of the Argentine and that nationalism, anyway, was only a vulgar import. Certainly his origins do much to explain why he can hover above both Western and Eastern civilisations with such ease. Argentina may not be, as some would have it, a country with no culture of its own. But its culture is new and eclectic enough to force intelligent Argentines to look abroad as well.

Unlike Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans, they cannot immerse themselves in their own traditions entirely: apart from those of the Indians, most of these traditions came from Europe in any case. Only a minority are notably attracted by Spain rather than the other European countries. Their habitual attitude to the "mother country" differs from that of Americans for good reasons: when the Americans' forerunners won their independence from Great Britain they were, to a considerable degree, simply reasserting their inherited rights as Englishmen, and Great Britain remained one of the world's most "advanced" countries with a great deal to teach them. The fathers of Argentine independence, however, were inspired by ideas from England, France, and the United States, and saw Spain as a decayed and backward country whose legacy they should proudly reject. This feeling, only slightly modified by Spain's remarkable renaissance in the 40 years preceding the Civil War, has persisted. Interestingly, while an English accent is considered "aristocratic" by many Americans, a Spanish accent reminds Argentines of a comic immigrant grocer and some think it incongruous to hear it being employed by King Juan Carlos, for instance. For Argentines, then, it is perfectly natural to look outside the Spanish-speaking world for ideas and inspiration, and Borges is by no means the only Argentine of his class to have been as familiar with a foreign language during his childhood as with his own.

Standing on the shores of the Western world—part of it, no doubt, but not feeling themselves wholly inside it—Latin Americans can pick and

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choose, gathering the best the world has to offer for incorporation into the new civilisation they are trying to construct. In the past they looked chiefly to Europe: most of them to France and England; some to Germany. More recently they have tended to concentrate on the United States. Now, perhaps, they will turn to the Far East, not only to Japan but to other countries that share the same underlying tradition. It is surely not an accident that the two most distinguished Latin American writers alive today, Borges and Octavio Paz, have progressively absorbed themselves in Eastern thought over the last few decades. Some Latin Americans have always argued that they could become "universal men" more easily than any European, North American, or, for that matter, Japanese or Chinese. The development of Borges and Paz suggests that they may well have been right.

A Strange Disturbing World

The Conflicts in Criticism—By BERNARD BERGONZI

LAST YEAR'S personal dramas in the Cambridge English Faculty have quietly ended in a game of musical chairs. Dr Colin McCabe, the Dreyfus of the affair, having enjoyed brief celebrity when he was not appointed to a permanent post after his temporary lecturership had come to an end, moved to Glasgow to become the youngest professor of English in the British Isles, at a much higher salary. Frank Kermode, who had supported McCabe, has taken early retirement from the King Edward VII chair of English and is going to Columbia. Christopher Ricks, who opposed McCabe, is moving into Kermode's chair, and has also earned the honorary ecclesiastical title of "Canon" Ricks because of his strong insistence that there is something called "the canon of English Literature" to be taught and defended. In terms of ideas, nothing has been decided, and ideas, not persons, were at the heart of the business.

The press did its best to say what the issues were, though at the cost of trivialising them: McCabe, it was said, had been penalised for propounding something called "structuralism", which the younger members of the Faculty and the students found new and exciting, and which was opposed by the stuffy traditionalists. This explanation was complicated by the fact that the professors supporting McCabe—Kermode and Raymond Williams—were both a lot older than Ricks, the professor opposing him. And in any case McCabe said he was not a structuralist at all, but a "post-structuralist." Journalists can only take on so much unfamiliar baggage at a time, and they stuck with structuralism as the central issue; they did their best to explain it to their readers, but found it hard going. Still, for a week or so there was scattered, uninformed talk about "structuralism", and the word stuck in popular consciousness. The larger irony is that all this took place when true structuralism—a product of French intellectual life in the 1960s—was beginning to fade into history. Other, more subversive phenomena were moving on to the academic stage: post-structuralism, deconstruction, "the anxiety of influence."

The questions briefly raised by the McCabe affair remain important and need discussion: what is literature, what is criticism, what is the present and future role of English in higher education? Helen Gardner, in *In Defence of the Imagination*,[1] based on the Charles Eliot Norton lectures that she delivered at Harvard in 1979-80, takes a sturdily traditional line on these matters.

In her first chapter she presents herself as a version of Rip Van Winkle. For about ten years, she explains, because of the pressure of professorial duties and scholarly commitments, she fell behind in reading critical books—apart from those on Donne or Eliot—and periodicals. After retirement from the Merton Chair at Oxford and the easing of other burdens she began to catch up on recent critical writing. She found herself "in a strange disturbing world", where there was an extraordinary new vocabulary ransacked from other disciplines like linguistics, psychology, philosophy and theology, or loosely coined from Latin or Greek. There were also words which the critic "had made up for his own pleasure in a mood of high spirits or 'playfulness', a word which for some appeared to be a synonym for critical activity." More serious were the abolition of the author as the creator of a text, and the denial of the text's objective status. Instead, the "reader" became paramount, an abstraction covering an infinitude of readers, all generating different readings endlessly.

Not liking this new world she proceeds to attack it, and goes on to make a series of polite but damaging onslaughts on named opponents: critics

[1] *In Defence of the Imagination*. By HELEN GARDNER. Oxford University Press, £12.50.

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such as Frank Kermode, Stanley Fish and Harold Bloom, and theatre directors of Shakespeare such as Peter Brook and John Barton. Denis Donoghue, in his *Times Literary Supplement* review of Helen Gardner's book, was pained by her polemical style, and particularly by her strictures on Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*, based on the Charles Eliot Norton lectures he had given the previous year. I think Donoghue is over-sensitive; it is wholesome if not very common these days for those who have strong convictions to express them strongly, and good for public discourse. Dame Helen's distinguished targets have the capacity and the opportunity to reply in their own way if they want to continue the argument. In its traditionalism and its attacking zeal her book is an approximate British equivalent to Gerald Graff's *Literature Against Itself*; when I briefly fell among deconstructionists in America last year I found that Graff's book was not so much regarded as wrong—if you do not believe in truth you can't reject error—as an object of scandal, a grotesque offence against good taste.

I enjoy Helen Gardner's polemics and I dislike many of the things she dislikes; not only the chilly anti-humanism of some versions of the newest criticism, but what she calls the "gross overproduction in the field of English study." A generation ago, Helen Gardner in Oxford and F. R. Leavis in Cambridge seemed to be at opposite poles in their attitudes to literature; but the passing of time and the emergence of new and unfamiliar approaches have made them seem quite close in their humanism and fierce conviction of the importance of literature.

And yet I cannot go all the way with Dame Helen. Unlike her, I think that structuralism provides the literary critic with valuable tools and terms, and that it can enlarge our understanding of what literature is. I am not sure how far I share all her implied positives; in her desire to read literature in terms of "history and common sense" she seems to me to underplay the element of "literariness" that distinguishes literature from other discourse, the pursuit of which has been an often illuminating aspect of recent criticism. Reasonably, she emphasises that a literary text is the product of an historical author in a given time and place; but she seems not to accept that literary meaning is created by the encounter—or tension—between what the author wrote and what the reader, in a different time and place, "makes of it", as our everyday idiom correctly puts it.

For Helen Gardner there seems to be no middle way between strict intentionalism and deconstructionism; and she rejects the latter's image of the reader "importing meanings into texts instead of attending to what he is reading." These are false oppositions; meanings are not imported, nor are they inertly read off from what the historical author wrote; they emerge in the encounter between an historical reader and an historical text, and are neither fixed nor infinitely variable; this, I take it, is what distinguishes literature from other kinds of writing. Like C. S. Lewis, Helen Gardner regards literary reading as a basically simple and unproblematical activity. Oxford English traditionally combined historical scholarship with straightforward "appreciation", and this is the spirit which pervades her book.

IN HER LAST CHAPTER, "Apologia Pro Vita Mea", she provides a spirited autobiographical account of her life in scholarship and letters. She was born in 1908, educated at a grammar school and went to Oxford on a scholarship; that is to say, she was part of what I regard as the best-read generation in our history. Literacy was universal, books were easily available from public libraries, in second-hand editions and Everyman's Library and World's Classics; there was little criticism to cope with, so that dedicated readers could immerse themselves in primary literature; and the habit of constant reading was a living thing, not having been destroyed or badly impaired by television. Readers of her generation had a ready historical sense that is lacking in many modern young readers; hence the current demands, which she deplores, for "relevance" and the study of contemporary literature.

I sympathise with her complaint, but I think she underestimates the difficulties. The study of the literature of the past, as she says, can be marvellously liberating, in particular from the assumptions of the present, by confronting us with the alien and unfamiliar; but the unfamiliar must already be in a sense familiar or else no communication at all takes place, still less liberation. Her generation was implicitly ready to see the relevance of the irrelevant, whereas modern students find that intellectual and imaginative effort extraordinarily difficult. A first-year student recently said to me that the trouble with two of her courses—one a study of medieval literature, the other of Homer and Virgil and Dante in translation, and of Milton—was that they didn't seem to be about proper human beings at all. Her criteria were fixed in what Northrop Frye calls "the low mimetic." Helen Gardner grew up at a time and in an intensely literary culture when there was no great conflict between reading what you wanted to read anyway and what an English curriculum told you to read. These assumptions no longer apply, hence much present difficulty. Students, even the brightest, are less well read and intellectually prepared; at the same time, the academic institutionalising of literary study has become more and more elaborate, with the proliferation and conflict of schools of criticism.

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THOUGH DENIS DONOGHUE was unhappy about Helen Gardner's book, his own *Ferocious Alphabets*[2] shows that on fundamental questions his position is close to hers, however different his tone and manner. If she is in favour of imagination and humanism, so is he, and he affirms: "I detest the current ideology which refers, gloatingly, to the death of the author, the obsolescence of the self, the end of man, and so forth." The tactical difference is that Donoghue says this at the end of his book, while Helen Gardner comes out with similar sentiments at the beginning of hers; and his preceding judgments are more tentative. Knowledgeably surveying recent criticism in France and America, he is more concerned to discuss than to attack, though his own valuations are implicitly present. On Harold Bloom, for instance, a critic for whom he professes admiration, his ultimate judgment is almost as severe as Helen Gardner's.

Ferocious Alphabets is an attractive but excessively mannered book. Donoghue's basic concern is the importance of voice, which reveals the presence of the author, as against the current emphasis on *écriture* which indicates his absence. His unfolding strategy involves him first in showing the importance of voice by reproducing a series of very short radio talks on words and language that he delivered for the BBC, accompanied in the book by accounts of the problems he found in preparing and delivering the talks, and reflections on what he thinks about them now.

Donoghue then proceeds to a group of brief essays, mostly on French or American critics and theorists. A division appears between those whose writing is simply *writing*, a matter of words on the page, and those whose writing evokes a personal speaking voice. Hugh Kenner is an example of the former, who uses phrases that no one would ever speak, like "chirographic deliberation" and "an amenuensis of verity"; "only a typewriter has ever secreted Kenner's phrases", Donoghue remarks (it may be insensitive but relevant to add that Kenner is deaf). William Empson, who always presents a conversational tone, both in his poetry and his criticism, is a contrasting figure. Donoghue develops this distinction, with a flourish of the neologisms that Helen Gardner dislikes, into "Epireading" (from *epos*, speech) and "Graphireading" (from *graphos*, writing). On the surface Donoghue is elaborately fair-minded, though his preference is clearly for Epireading, where one senses the presence of a person through or beyond the text, rather than for Graphireading, which emphasises the lack of presence; notably in Jacques Derrida, the guru of deconstruction, for whom the best thing one can do with a text is to play with it.

Donoghue is respectful to Derrida, but much

[2] *Ferocious Alphabets*. By DENIS DONOGHUE. Faber, £8.95.

HAROLD BLOOM

The Breaking of the Vessels

The Breaking of the Vessels is an eloquent, passionate, aggressive, highly personal summary and apologia by Harold Bloom of his theoretical and practical literary criticism of the last decade, from *The Anxiety of Influence* to *Agon*. A definitive statement of Bloom's concept of the poem as act, it both insists upon and exemplifies his contention that valid criticism must be experiential.
Published April 1982, £7.00

Harold Bloom's is the first volume in a new and important series from The University of Chicago Press: *The Wellek Library Lectures* at the University of California, Irvine. Each volume will present the thought of a distinguished critical theorist on a single topic, theme, or problem. The governing idea of the series is that the lecturer will, in a highly focused and accessible fashion, expose, elaborate, and defend his stance as a theorist within the contemporary context of his work.

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sharper with his disciple, Lucette Finas, who has written a long commentary on a short poem by Mallarmé. Mallarmé is, incidentally, a significant forerunner of Graphireading (and of structuralist approaches in general); he was a poet for whom poetry was essentially a matter of marks on a page, in contrast to his near-contemporary Hopkins, whose poetry always invokes the voice. Lucette Finas writes elegant psychobabble or free-association about Mallarmé's text, a form of fiction, perhaps, as Donoghue acknowledges, rather than anything identifiable as literary criticism however broadly conceived.

Ferocious Alphabets touches on major issues in a slightly off-hand way. The book gives a useful brief survey of the present landscape of critical theory, and its affirmation of voice and person against the self-sufficiency of *écriture* and text revives arguments advanced in the '60s by Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

DONOGHUE QUOTES Geoffrey Hartman as saying that deconstruction is "the eclipse of voice by text." Hartman's *Saving the Text*[3] shows him at one and the same time engaging with Derrida, succumbing to him, imitating him and resisting him. His writing is determinedly playful, recalling Helen Gardner's sharp comment about playfulness being a synonym for critical activity; witness his extreme verbal self-consciousness, his frequent puns and his jokey chapter headings: "Monsieur Texte", "Epiphony in Echoland", "How to Reap a Page", "Psychoanalysis: The French Connection", "Words and Wounds." His own remark about Derrida can apply to Hartman himself:

> "The problem, on the surface at least, is the persistence, the seriousness, with which an intelligence of this order employs devices that seem to be at best witty and at worst trivial."

Hartman's book presents a multiple perspective of texts: there is extended comment on Derrida's book *Glas* (="knell", and also, punningly, *glace* ="ice or mirror") which is itself a parallel collage, with Derrida's commentary, of texts by Hegel and Genet, enacting the juxtaposition of philosophy and literature briefly indicated in Hartman's subtitle. For someone who does not believe in the self or in presence Derrida is a central enough presence in this book, as in many others; perhaps, thinking of him as a bare name and no essential thing, and bearing in mind his own taste for distancing quotation marks, one should present him as "Derrida." His historical masters are Mallarmé and Nietzsche; thus do the tormented culture heroes of one *fin de siècle* return to haunt the next.

In more than one sense Hartman "goes along with" Derrida, but his book hints at an underground yearning for voice and presence, which surfaces in the final chapter, "Words and Wounds." *Saving the Text* contains elements of both criticism and philosophy but it exemplifies the deconstructionist tendency for such kinds of writing to turn into modes of fiction. Read as a work of fiction it is dense and cloyingly arch. In addition to the word-play there is a crooning, caressing quality in Hartman's prose, the tone of a man talking quietly and earnestly to himself rather than trying to communicate to others; an example, perhaps, of the loneliness of the American academic pontiff.

UNTYING THE TEXT[4] echoes *Saving the Text;* "untying" here means deconstructing, and the contributors to Robert Young's collection are all committed to various versions of post-structuralism and deconstruction. Some of them are top Frenchmen, translated for the occasion: Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Etienne Balibar, Pierre Macheray, and Michel Riffaterre. The rest are English or American, the biggest guns being Hillis Miller and Paul de Man. Barbara Johnson, writing in a sober, unplayful spirit, presents a lucid definition:

> "Deconstruction is not synonymous with 'destruction'. . . . It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means 'to undo'—a virtual synonym for 'to de-construct'. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text itself, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another."

This is rational enough, but it sounds like the bland official version of something that tends to be different in practice. The question of whether there can be plainly wrong or unacceptable readings of a text is not faced. Most of the contributors write less clearly and cogently than Barbara Johnson; notably the editor, who contributes turbid short introductions to each essay as well as a general introduction.

I cannot feel much enthusiasm for this volume, though I acknowledge that it brings together a lot of powerful intellects, and some enquiring readers may find it helpful. It is the kind of book that is likely to be more bought than read; I imagine the

[3] *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy.* By GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN. Johns Hopkins University Press, $16.20, £7.75.

[4] *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader.* Edited by ROBERT YOUNG. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £12.50, paper £4.95.

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number of people who are capable of fully mastering and engaging with its arguments must be extremely small. Messrs Routledge are in any case presumably not expecting much in the way of sales, which is why they have brought it out in such a miserably unattractive format—reproduced typescript without justified right-hand margins.

THEY, OR THEIR American printers, have done a very much better job on Jonathan Culler's *The Pursuit of Signs*.[5] *Untying the Text* carries a warm recommendation from Culler on the back, but anyone genuinely interested in pursuing the later fortunes of structuralism would be better advised to go straight to Culler's own book. It is a collection of separate but linked essays which develops implications and arguments from his earlier *Structuralist Poetics*; like its predecessor, it is a work of formidable brainpower, to use an old-fashioned term. Culler is a beautifully mannered expositor, whose prose is urbane, subdued and always as clear as an often difficult subject matter permits; the tone is unmistakably that of a communicator. The familiarity of tone contrasts with the radical unfamiliarity of what Culler is actually saying for much of the time. His understanding of what literature is and how it should be studied is based on quite other premises than those that are still taken for granted in Anglo-American literary education. He is a creatively challenging writer and *The Pursuit of Signs* is a fine example of the play of mind in the traditional and responsible sense.

Some of his best essays suggest how structuralist insights might be assimilated to more familiar kinds of critical reading; notably "Presupposition and Intertextuality", "Story and Discourse in the Analysis of Narrative" and "Apostrophe." All the same, Culler is an alien thinker, concerned with literature as discourse and text rather than as human expression, and the concept of imagination is evidently dispensable for him. He is generally more interested in theory and poetics than in particular texts, though he has a wide range of literary reading to draw on and is an effective close reader when he wants to be. Culler seems not to regard literature as a particularly privileged or value-bearing discourse though he finds it immensely interesting and wishes it to be studied in more systematic ways. Above all, he thinks we have enough interpretations of particular texts, and it is not difficult to agree with him about this, given the critical over-production to which Helen Gardner refers. (She, too, tends to disapprove of interpretation, on the traditional Oxford ground that most

[5] *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. By JONATHAN CULLER. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £7.95; paper, £3.95.

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literature is straightforward enough not to need interpreting.) Culler believes that there are more urgent and important tasks for literary scholarship to pursue, especially in the better understanding of how literature relates to other kinds of discourse. In his final chapter, "Literary Theory in the Graduate Programme", Culler makes some useful practical suggestions, though of more immediate relevance to American academic life than to British.

The Pursuit of Signs, like *Structuralist Poetics*, is dominated by the idea that we need an intellectually respectable poetics, which will stand in the same relation to literature as linguistics does to language. It is an appealing idea, but Graham Martin has made, more or less in passing, a cogent objection to it in his essay in Peter Widdowson's collection, *Re-Reading English*.[6] People studying linguistics are certainly competent in their own language, and probably in others; in short, they know from experience what language is. Most students of literature simply do not have the breadth of reading that would enable them to operate on the more abstract level of poetics. Culler's response, I imagine, would be that he is not concerned with undergraduates but with scholars. Indeed, he accepts that the methods of the old New Criticism—close reading of isolated specific texts—are inevitable in a teaching situation; but, adds Culler, "what is good for literary education is not necessarily good for the study of literature in general", thereby making separate two things that in British practice, at least, have always gone together.

Culler makes the interesting suggestion that the reason that deconstruction has become something of an academic cult in America is that it can be seen as an extreme but logical development of the New Criticism—again, something about which Helen Gardner might agree—in its practice of super-close reading as opposed to the difficult, larger contextual demands of Marxism or structuralism. The thrust of Culler's attack comes with his insistence that

> "the New Criticism's dream of a self-contained encounter between innocent reader and autonomous text is a bizarre fiction. To read is always to read in relation to other texts, in relation to the codes that are the products of these texts and go to make up a culture."

This, it seems to me, is a central challenge, which those of us engaged in teaching English need to respond to; it sounds persuasive but not self-evidently true; against Culler's insistence on pre-existing codes and conventions one might invoke certain innate human tendencies to generate and respond to narrative, if only in dreams, and to engage in the rhythmic utterance which is the basis of poetry.

CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE'S *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*[7] is, like Culler's, a work by a dazzlingly brainy writer who conveys unfamiliar ideas and attitudes in a familiar, apprehensible manner. She is an English novelist, critic and academic of francophone upbringing who has taught in France for several years, and though she once read English at Oxford her intellectual world is now largely formed by Russian formalists and French structuralists, whom she takes for granted and discusses in a matter-of-fact way, without fuss or special advocacy. Their effect is balanced or offset by her surviving English empiricism, common sense, and directness of style.

For a critic to be immensely well-read is perhaps no more than one expects of a true professional; but with Brooke-Rose the range is unusually wide and available, all the way from medieval romance to the latest forms of French or American post-modernist fiction. She is a highly competent critical technician, who can do all jobs herself, from the most fiddling up to the largest; she has a stimulating capacity to switch within a page or two from the intensive reading of a small unit of narrative to a wide historical sweep. Even her frequent recourse to charts, diagrams and tables, which usually get up the nose of the English reader, is done with style and dash. Parts of her book are tough reading, but well worth persisting with, and it considerably increased my understanding of the nature and implications of fantasy as a genre.

Her most extended single discussion is a hundred-page close examination of *The Turn of the Screw*, which employs the methods of Chomskyan linguistics and is less arid than one might expect, though some way before the end weariness sets in. Brooke-Rose on James's novella has some affinities with Barthes on Balzac's *Sarrasine* in *S/Z*, though she is more responsive to the historical author. She reveals the extraordinary capacity of the creative literary intelligence to generate micropatterns of parallel, contrast, repetition, and so forth, on the lexical, phonological and syntactical levels. Something similar emerged from Jakobson's exhaustive analyses of poems by Shakespeare and Baudelaire (which were, incidentally, the object of sceptical discussion by Culler in *Structuralist Poetics*). Brooke-Rose on James may attract the same objections that Jakobson did; of providing too much information, which is redundant and irrelevant to any possible interpretation of the text, though to say this both opens up and begs the question of

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[6] *Re-Reading English*. Edited by PETER WIDDOWSON. Methuen, £7.95; paper, £3.95.

[7] *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic*. By CHRISTINE BROOKE-ROSE. Cambridge University Press, £25.00.

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what literary interpretation is, and what we expect from it.

She is an extraordinarily acute and suggestive reader, though. My final response to her book, which is a product of the contemporary French intellectual milieu, is: what are the conditions of academic practice that permit or encourage such rigorous minuteness of examination?

IN *The Imaginary Library*[8] Alvin B. Kernan offers a thoughtful but inconclusive discussion of the present state of "Literature", considered not as a timeless Platonic form but as an institution in Western society that emerged in the 18th century and whose future now looks problematical. Kernan combines general reflection with a detailed reading of four recent American texts which he sees as offering paradigmatic presentations of the current crisis in the social situation of the creative writer and of literature as an institution: Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift*, Malamud's *The Tenants*, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, and Mailer's *Of a Fire on the Moon*. Some of Kernan's best pages are devoted to the implications of the close but ambiguous embrace of literature by "English" as a widely institutionalised academic subject. This is a modest, quietly suggestive study.

RE-READING ENGLISH, which I mentioned earlier, is a series of essays directed at the present state of English studies in Britain. Most of the contributors are Marxist academics and rather predictable in their views; there is a sense in which they seem to be writing for each other rather than the large bourgeois public, and there are references to small, in-group controversies as though they had been matters of national debate. In general, they are more conscious of what they don't like than of what they want to see in its place. Several contributors attack the present "canon" of English literature but without suggesting what an alternative one might look like; to reply that one doesn't need a canon at all is to ignore the objection that students have the right to know what books they are expected to read. There are some usefully informative essays, such as Brian Doyle's account of the 19th-century prehistory of English, as a form of nationalistic cultural studies particularly aimed at women; Graham Martin is interesting on English

[8] *The Imaginary Library: An Essay on Literature and Society*. By ALVIN B. KERNAN. Princeton University Press, $19.50, £10.60.

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THE LYTTELTON HART-DAVIS LETTERS
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in the Open University, and John Oakley and Elizabeth Owen on the effect of the Council for National Academic Awards' validating procedures on English courses in polytechnics and colleges of higher education, where the teachers presenting such courses have had to think hard about and defend what they were doing, a salutary process which might benefit many university English departments. Tony Davis's essay presents with uncomfortable authenticity the common plight of the English seminar teacher facing a class with *Lycidas* or *Middlemarch* open in front of him: "what comes out of my mouth then is likely to sound, by the highest standards of discursive rigour, decidedly limp: 'Well, what do you think of this, then?' " The same essayist confronts the Marxist demand, which recurs throughout the book, for a shift away from the pedagogic focus on text and author to the larger historical and political contexts of literary study, and reluctantly accepts the virtual impossibility of a radical change: "It is extraordinarily difficult to imagine, still more to imagine *teaching*, a Literature syllabus whose nodal points of reference are not textual and authorial."

Such conflicts between the feasible and the ideologically desirable surface at intervals, inviting a deconstructionist assessment of the whole collection. Some essayists have succumbed to the grim, paranoid lure of Marxist-structuralism, for whom literature has seemingly no aesthetic or sensory qualities at all, only a symptomatic function in revealing the ideological contradictions in bourgeois society. Other contributors, though (like John Hoyles, David Craig and Michael Egan) are inspired by a humanistic Marxism with which the rest of us might enter into dialogue.

IN THE ADVANCED CRITICISM of our *fin de siècle*, or *fin de millénaire*, two mad, anti-humanist philosophers are strangely conspicuous: Nietzsche among the deconstructionists, and the uxoricidal M. Althusser among the Marxist-structuralists. There is a kind of genial madness running through *Reading Relations*,[9] a long, rambling, unclassifiable book about the necessity and impossibility of being a Marxist critic and lecturer here and now in England. The rejection of Althusserianism is evidently a key element in Bernard Sharratt's sense of personal and cultural crisis, and one subtext of the book is the author's sustained dialogue or encounter with the sometime Althusserian, Terry Eagleton, who is both the Dean and the Vicar of Bray of British Marxist criticism, and who provides a warm though oddly worded puff for the book,

[9] *Reading Relations: Structures of Literary Production: A Dialectical Text/Book*. By BERNARD SHARRATT. Harvester Press, £18.95.

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quoted on the front and back of the jacket. In one section of the book Sharratt seems to be sending Eagleton up by imitating one of the diagrams illustrating the play of ideological forces that occur in the latter's *Ideology and Criticism* and then providing a whole series of diagrams of ever-increasing complication and absurdity.

Reading Relations is shot through with a desperate playfulness. The author seldom if ever speaks in his own voice; the book engages wholesale in what the Russian formalists called "baring the device", exhibiting and undermining the conventions of academic writing in a tradition that goes back to *The Tale of a Tub*, and even includes a long, savagely unfavourable review of itself.

It is an encyclopaedic, parodistic, self-regarding text which is, or is not, a work of criticism, literary theory, fiction, Platonic dialogue, historical research, and autobiography. A fashionable and positive way of describing the book would be "carnivalesque" and "dialogic"; less fashionably, one could call it a mess, and weirdly self-indulgent. To say what the book is is one problem; another, even harder, is to say what it is for. Sharratt is an eloquent, learned, manically energetic writer, whose approach is wholeheartedly dialectic, which means that opposed statements can both be true if one wants them to be. In that spirit I can dialectically sum up his book, with the ever-accommodating virgule, as "very interesting/very boring."

Men & Women

On Shakespeare—By J. I. M. Stewart

WHEN CLAUDIUS SPEAKS of Hamlet as formidable because of "the great love the general gender bear him", he means by "gender" simply "sort" or "class": the common people will be on Hamlet's side. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that this use of the word is obsolete, and that its transferred use as a synonym for "sex" is "now only *jocular*." It has been jocular for quite a long time:

> *Amo, amas, I loved a lass,*
> *And she was tall and slender;*
> *Amo, amas, I was an ass*
> *To love a feminine gender.*

That is John O'Keefe (or an adaptation from him) at the close of the 18th century. Marilyn French revives this use with wholly serious intent. *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*[1] is about what she calls the gender principle as it is operative throughout Shakespeare's plays.

We apply the gender principle to experience whenever we view men and women, masculinity and femininity, as differing one from the other not in the few regards in which they really do differ, but as immemorial culture patterns declare them to differ. To control and subjugate nature was the urgent task of primitive man; women, because of certain "involuntary but very visible functions", came to be seen as "closer to nature" than men, and therefore to be subjugated and controlled; and this explains "the almost universal derogation of women." It is prescriptive for men to own and inherit, to dominate, to fight and kill. No problem, one may say. But with women it is much more difficult. "They represent the nonhuman." They are typed as either superhuman ("idealisms of moral excellence", as Shelley somewhere says) or subhuman. If the first, according to Dr French, they are exhibiting their "inlaw" aspect; if the second, their "outlaw" aspect. Most cultures see at least some advantage in men taking on a little of inlaw femininity: gentleness, fidelity, compassion, and the like. But women who, correspondingly, partake in any appreciable degree of masculine traits are without the law; their associations are with whoredom and witchcraft, the castrating bitch, lust, and sexual abomination. Dr French at least makes her point here neatly: "The door between the gender principles opens only one way."

On these stark polarities much of Shakespeare's work is framed. He explores the implications, the reverberations, of the gender principle without ever, so to speak, quite seeing through it. Dr French exhibits great resource in the application of her ideas, the employment of her terminology, when examining more than twenty of the plays. But that much that is both new to us and valid has been revealed at the close of the exercise seems to me a little doubtful.

Take *Macbeth*. It opens upon an ambiguity of gender roles; the Witches are female, but have beards. It opens, too, quite horrifically on a man's world within a "heroic" culture. There is bloody execution all over the place, and Macbeth is as much a butcher at the start as he is at the finish.

[1] *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*. By MARILYN FRENCH. Cape, £12.50.

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Yet until his irrevocable deed he has a dim sense that within this hideous world of ambition and power-struggle certain sanctities remain. They are the sanctities associated with the inlaw aspect of femininity: the felicities of peaceful love, friendship, hospitality, procreation, fidelity, pity, compassion. The point comes at which Macbeth, amid all the killings of which the play reeks, kills *against the rules*, betraying a double trust. He thus breaches moral law. But his wife's is held to be the deeper guilt, since her urging him to the murder of Duncan is not merely against morality but also against nature. "Her crime is heinous because it violates her social role . . . she fails to uphold the feminine principle." Much of this is very true. But it is scarcely truth that has not been known to us, in terms of a different vocabulary, since we first read the play at school.

In a concluding chapter Dr French goes to town on a first-class feminist ticket. Western culture is founded on misogyny. Worldly power in men is entirely a power to evil; in women it is held an abomination with overtones of sexual corruption; because Shakespeare associates sexuality with women, his "hatred for the one is also hatred for the other." He strives throughout his later career, it is true, to be something other and better than a male supremacist, but it is uphill work, since his finer perceptions have the entire ethos of our society ranged against them.

"My approach to Shakespeare", Dr French writes, "is certainly not the only way of reading the poet." No, indeed. In the light of it, what, for example, is to be made of *Romeo and Juliet*? Dr French accords three lines to the Nurse, and elsewhere merely remarks that in the play "the penis is seen as an instrument of power: one uses a sword to subdue men, a penis to subdue women." Over thirty prolix and plodding pages of this book are devoted to the first historical tetralogy, but in the greatest love story in the language we listen only to a couple of serving men, Sampson and Gregory.

FROM THE DUEL of sex as Dr French views it we pass to the psychomachia or battle for the soul celebrated by Prudentius in the fourth century, and seen by Arthur Kirsch as "a reservoir of dramatic thinking" for Shakespeare and his audience more than a thousand years later. *Shakespeare and the Experience of Love*[2] begins with a brief discussion of medieval drama, and stresses the well-known fact that the morality plays in particular remained potent in the popular imagination throughout the Elizabethan period. A striking exemplification of this is found in an improving book published in 1639 entitled *Mount Tabor. Or Private Exercises of a Penitent Sinner*. Its author, Ralph Willis, was 75, and he recalls seeing as a boy a play (no longer extant) called *The Cradle of Security*. ("Security" here cannot bear its modern sense; we may remember that one of the Witches in *Macbeth* declares that "security is mortals' chiefest enemy.") There was a king in *The Cradle of Security*, and three ladies, and two old men. Willis dutifully names the moral quality each stands for, but it is clear that they were real people for the boy nevertheless. "This sight tooke such impressions in me that, when I came towards mans estate, it was as fresh in my memory as if I had seen it newly acted."

In morality drama, then, the characters are conceived as personifications of moral qualities; they have at the same time enormous concrete vitality; and their interaction within the play has the function of rendering visible interactions hidden within the soul of the play's protagonist. Thus Shakespeare's audience was ready-trained, as it were, to view drama as an allegorisation of human experience designed to penetrate and exhibit the primitive components and processes of human behaviour.

Imagine Professor Kirsch and Dr French sitting side by side as the curtain goes up on, say, *Othello*. What do they severally see? Dr French's play is a painful probing of relations between males and females. There is Iago, who is "masculine" without the rewards of masculinity. There is Othello, who is almost as "masculine" as Iago; who denies the erotic element in love; and who could easily become rather a bore. There is Desdemona, present at all only because "misogynistic cultures . . . always need a safety pocket." And so on. Professor Kirsch feels that Shakespeare has "intended and expected his audience to understand the three central characters (if not the others also) as composing a single moral and psychic entity, Desdemona and Iago being conceived as expressions of discrete elemental forces within Othello." So here are two playgoers, with expectations so widely different that one or other of them seems certain to want his or her money back. But Professor Kirsch has further expectations as well.

The person trained today "to penetrate and exhibit the primitive components and processes of human behaviour" is pre-eminently the psychoanalyst, and it is to Freud that we are now led. Freud, in a sense, "had to recover through psychoanalytical excavation" an understanding of the psychomachia, though with him in a libidinal rather than a moral or spiritual field. So Freud's insights supplement rather than confute Christian ones. Turn to *Othello* again, and we have this:

> "In the broadest sense, Othello's behaviour in the second half of the play is a dramatisation of

[2] *Shakespeare and the Experience of Love*. By ARTHUR KIRSCH. Cambridge University Press, £16.00.

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guilt. In Christian terms the temptation scene [3.3.] recollects the Fall of Man, which Augustine interpreted as an allegorical representation of an essentially psychomachic process, the disorder of the soul by which reason becomes subjected to passion. In analogous psychoanalytical terms, the guilt is the aggression of the unconscious . . . in which Iago represents one part of Othello and Desdemona another, and in which his destruction of Desdemona is a literal enactment of his ultimately self-destructive aggression against himself."

It is curious and suggestive (although logically not quite pat) that Iago is, as W. H. Auden has suggested, an analyst after a fashion; that he "treats Othello as an analyst treats a patient except that, of course, his intention is to kill not to cure." Professor Kirsch performs with a steady confidence in this sort of exegesis. He is always, as he says he hopes to be, "temperate." I find myself not quite going with the notion that the Duke in *Measure for Measure* (like Prospero in *The Tempest*?) is virtually another psychoanalyst on the prowl. But this is a steadily stimulating book, and that is something that surprisingly few books about Shakespeare contrive to be.

HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER's *Prefaces to Shakespeare* are now issued in paperback, but reassorted into seven volumes and not without some confusion. (In a list of the volumes the preface to *The Merchant of Venice* is announced as appearing twice. The preface to *Coriolanus* was first published in 1947 and not in 1930 as here stated.) Each of the present two volumes[3] announces "Foreword by Sir John Gielgud", and I think it might fairly be expected that each foreword should in some way be apposite to the volume it prefaces. But it turns out to be the identical foreword in each case, and to give merely a sketch of Sir John's association with Granville-Barker as a producer of Shakespeare in general. It is not without amusement, and is perhaps a little unkind to Granville-Barker's wife. The lady insisted that her husband's punctual lunch-hour be deferred to during rehearsals, and it would appear that (unlike Voltaire) she would have approved Congreve's holding it more important to be a fine gentleman than a good playwright; when, upon Granville-Barker's death, Sir John proposed to organise a memorial service, she declared she had no wish to see her husband "publicly commemorated 'by

[3] *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice.* By HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER. Batsford, £3.95. *Prefaces to Shakespeare: Coriolanus.* By HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER. Batsford, £3.95.

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actors'." It is or was, I suppose, well known that the squirarchal Granville-Barker was himself a little chary of the dyer's hand and making himself a motley to the view, and that, sadly, he eventually withdrew from his proper vocation as a result.

When the first series of prefaces was originally published it carried a general introduction by Granville-Barker which is of some interest in relation to the labours of Professor Kirsch and other investigative critics. The intention of all great drama, Shakespeare's included, is, he says, to concentrate not upon "men as they show themselves to the world like figures on a stage . . . but on the hidden man." This was written in 1927. Already in 1923 C. H. Herford, a deep scholar not noted for escapes of rash speculation, remarked that modern psychology, probing such phenomena as those of dual and multiple personality, might throw light upon vexed "character problems" in the plays. The hidden man has in fact been long-established in criticism; we all suspect that our unknown selves are sometimes more potent than our known; perhaps we go to the theatre partly to cope with this alarming thought. Of Freudian criticism, nevertheless, we ought to be a little wary. It tends to extravagance—as it does, for example, in *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*,[4] in which Marjorie Garber reports to us that Othello may be indicted of a fear of impotency, homosexuality, castration, or of "a lack of self-esteem." Flights of this sort are, of course, alien alike to Professor Kirsch and to Granville-Barker before him. The former, as I have said, is temperate. The latter, no proponent of any sort of esoteric Shakespeare, will be remembered as the man who learnt from experience of the stage how subtle and various are the means by which the dramatist knits scene to scene to achieve the momentum and concentration at which a playwright must always aim.

THERE IS A LINK here with *The Structure of Shakespearean Scenes*,[5] a book devoted to discriminating and analysing the various types of scene which were for Shakespeare the essential units of dramatic structure. A just appraisal of the importance of the *scenes*, James E. Hirsh insists, has been much bedevilled by the notion that Shakespeare thought primarily in terms of *acts*. This is little more than a figment of inadequate scholarship, detected by Samuel Johnson long ago, and the truth of the matter was proclaimed by Levin Schücking in 1922 when he wrote of "Shakespeare's supreme interest in the single scene." That Schücking in fact presents this as censure, as something detracting from the overall psychological coherence of the plays, is irrelevant. William Empson penetrates to the essence of the matter in declaring that Shakespeare employs a "system of construction by scenes" which are compared even when they are not connected, thus establishing ironic relationships that hold together the disparate element of a play.

Professor Hirsh might here call into court one even more distinguished than Professor Empson. Tolstoy, who thought so poorly of Shakespeare in a general way, admits at least that his "speciality" lies in "masterly development of the scenes." Or, as Professor Hirsh himself puts it, "An individual Shakespearean scene . . . almost always displays a distinct and coherent internal dramatic structure." What constitutes a scene? Consult most of the texts when they have undergone the attention of editors, and one may be puzzled to find a generally valid answer to this question. But Shakespeare himself would have been perfectly sure about it. A scene is everything that transacts itself between one clearing of the stage and the next. There may be difficulties. Does a scene end, or not end, if the stage be still tenanted by a corpse? Or perhaps by a character asleep or in a swoon? Such borderline cases are not important, and we are at once introduced to the several types of scene found in Shakespeare. "Unitary" scenes may exhibit either a single character (and are thus to be termed "solo") or two characters ("duet") or a single unchanging group of characters ("unitary group") or a group the composition of which varies within the scene ("multipartite").

There is something a little arid about this, and it cannot be said that Professor Hirsh's subsequent method, which is to dodge from play to play with one or another of these varieties of scene in his hand, conduces to easy reading. Granville-Barker showed *Antony and Cleopatra*, in particular, to be a perfectly integrated dramatic whole, every scene being in a significant interrelationship with those coming before and after it. In the present study, scene 28 (or 4.1) is considered on page 85 and scene 3 (or 1.3) on page 142. This is advanced in the interest, indeed, of a structural analysis which is interesting and fruitful on its own ground. But it is a treatment under which the plays themselves turn a little elusive.

THE MINOR ELIZABETHAN dramatists are not quite what they were for Charles Lamb, or in the salad days of T. S. Eliot. But some activities may be reported on. Webster has made the Critical Heritage[6] series, the gathering beginning with what

[4] *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*. By MARJORIE GARBER. Methuen, £12.50.

[5] *The Structure of Shakespearean Scenes*. By JAMES E. HIRSH. Yale University Press, $18.00, £12.60.

[6] *Webster: The Critical Heritage*. Edited by DON D. MOORE. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £8.95.

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Webster had to say about himself and concluding with his entry (1899) in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. A Festschrift[7] of high quality has been published in honour of Harold F. Brooks, one of the most learned and best-loved of living English scholars. And finally, S. Gorley Putt's *The Golden Age of English Drama*[8] is a magisterial collection of essays on Peele, Kyd, Lyly, Marlowe, Jonson, Thomas Heywood, Marston, Chapman, Tourneur, Middleton, Webster, Ford, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger. This book would make an admirable and sufficient companion to a year's exploration of that crowded stage.

[7] *Poetry and Drama 1570–1700*. Edited by ANTHONY COLEMAN and ANTHONY HAMMOND. Methuen, £13.50.

[8] *The Golden Age of English Drama: Enjoyment of Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays*. By. S. GORLEY PUTT. D. S. Brewer, £15.00.

The Cult of Irrationality

Ted Hughes & His Critics—By GRAHAM BRADSHAW

SITTING IN THE SORBONNE one morning to hear Gustave Cohen's commentary on *Le Cimetière Marin*, Paul Valéry was gripped by "a very strange sensation." "I felt like my own *Shade*", he recalled, "and none the less I identified myself at times with one or other of those students listening, taking notes. . . . My presence was strangely divided amongst several ways of being there." Above all, the experience brought a troubling, pregnant realisation of "how opposed to each other are our *being* and our *appearance*":

> "On the one hand, my poem studied as a *fait accompli*, revealing to the expert's examination its composition, its intentions, its means of action, its position in the framework of literary history; its connexions, and the probable state of mind of its author. . . . On the other hand, the memory of my experiments, my gropings, my inward decipherings, and of those highly imperious verbal illuminations which suddenly impose upon one a certain combination of words—as if such a group possessed some sort of intrinsic power—I was about to say: some sort of *will* to exist, totally opposed to the 'freedom' or chaos of the mind, and which can sometimes compel the mind to deviate from its purpose, and the poem to become quite other than it was going to be, than one thought it would have to be."

"Here", Valéry reflects, "one sees that the notion 'author' is not simple: it is only so from the point of view of a *third party*."

In his later criticism F. R. Leavis became more than ever concerned to vindicate the status of literature as thought, specifying that the thought in question was creative and heuristic, and essentially unlike logical discursive thought. Although the distinction was most frequently elaborated with reference to Blake, D. H. Lawrence, and T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Leavis would also refer to Valéry, sometimes reciting passages of *Le Cimetière Marin* from memory; to the late Eugenio Montale, whom he knew personally and whose poetry he greatly admired; and (once at least, in my memory) to Boris Pasternak, whose notion of "safe conduct" rests on a similar distinction between logically sequential thought and creative solicitation.

Ted Hughes was never mentioned, and so far as I know never read by Leavis. ("My husband and I have no time to waste", Mrs Leavis told me when I recommended *Wodwo*; "you're younger and may have time for such things.") Yet "The Thought-Fox", one of Hughes's earliest and best known poems, both exemplifies and provides a creative commentary on the process Valéry characterised by speaking of "inner decipherings" and "imperious verbal illuminations." Moreover, when Hughes discussed that poem in *Poetry in the Making* he insisted, no less urgently than Leavis himself, on the fundamental human significance of this heuristic "thinking process":

> "There is the inner life, which is the world of final reality, the world of memory, emotion, imagination, intelligence, and natural common sense, and which goes on all the time, consciously or unconsciously, like the hearbeat. There is also the thinking process by which we break into that inner life and capture answers and evidence to support the answers out of it. That process of raid, or persuasion, or ambush, or dogged hunt, or surrender, is the kind of thinking we have to learn and if we do not somehow learn it, then our minds lie in us like the fish in the pond of a man who cannot fish."

To associate the names of Leavis and Hughes will exasperate, amuse or offend many of Hughes' admirers, and those admirers of Leavis who

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regarded *Crow* as an ugly and ominous portent; but the points of contact are as instructive as the points of divergence. 1975 saw the publication of the first, limited edition of Hughes's *Cave Birds* and of Leavis's *The Living Principle*. Hughes had decided against giving his book the subtitle "The Death of Socrates and his Resurrection in Egypt", but *Cave Birds* includes a creative critique of post-Socratic and post-Christian dualistic abstraction; Leavis's book is subtitled " 'English' as a Discipline of Thought" (for reasons already suggested), and argues that "the Cartesian-Newtonian dualism must be exorcised from the Western mind." However unexpectedly, *Crow, Cave Birds* and *The Living Principle* do converge in their diagnostic concern with the course of modern civilisation; they overlap in their respective diagnoses of the effects of dualism and of the revolution in thought in 17th-century England.

THE DIVERGENCES are indeed striking. So, for example, in the 1970 interview with Ekbert Faas that was published in the *London Magazine* the following January, Hughes explained that his idea in *Crow* "was originally just to write his songs . . . in a super-simple and super-ugly language which would in a way shed everything except just what he wanted to say without any other consideration"; the verse was to be free (unlike the carefully crafted early poems) because "the very sound of metre calls up the ghosts of the past and it is difficult to sing one's own tune against that choir." It is easy to imagine Leavis retorting that a man who could say "It is easier to speak a language that raises no ghosts" showed little knowledge of what language is. For Leavis, what is needed is a "more than notional" realisation that language itself is "more than a means of expression"; it is, he writes in a remarkable passage in *The Living Principle*, "the heuristic conquest won out of representative experience, the upshot or precipitate of immemorial human living, and embodies values, distinctions, identifications, conclusions, promptings, cartographical hints and tested potentialities."

That was not the view of Dryden when he wrote in the preface to *Religio Laici* that "A Man is to be cheated into Passion, but to be reason'd into Truth", nor of Locke when he explained in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Book III, chapter 10) that "all the artificial and figurative applications of Words Eloquence hath invented are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgement, and so indeed are perfect cheat." Concurrences of that ominous kind bore witness to, and helped to foster, the post-Cartesian climate in which it became ever harder to vindicate the status of literature as thought. The natural vehicle for "clear and distinct ideas" is discursive prose or mathematics, not poetry, not Shakespeare's English. Yet here Leavis and Hughes suddenly converge again. They are both intensely concerned with a modern *malaise*, a failure to render life spiritually significant; they both connect this with the crucial 17th-century crisis (although Hughes is also concerned with what he regards as earlier, anticipatory, cultural disasters); they both look back to Blake and Lawrence—though never across to each other—in continuing the earlier writers' assault on spiritless materialism.

CRITICS USED to refer to Hughes as an "animal poet", which was imperceptive. Now, as is evident in the two best books on Hughes—Keith Sagar's pioneering *The Art of Ted Hughes* and the recently published *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study* by Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts[1]—critics more frequently stress Hughes's claim to be considered as a "visionary poet." Despite the good reasons for this, there are attendant dangers. The same cultural and historical developments which brought into question literature's status as thought were, as was recognised even in the 17th century, equally inimical to religion and especially idiosyncratic makeshift religions, "visions" and elaborately evolved mythologies. The claim that Hughes is a "visionary poet" is all too likely to be counter-productive in Hughes's case as in Blake's, especially with those readers who do not already belong to a convinced minority.

Moreover, I believe Orwell was warning us of a very real danger when, in his essay "Inside the Whale", he grouped together several major and minor writers who were in other respects utterly different and even, like Lawrence and Eliot or Huxley and Joyce, antipathetic, in order to observe:

> "All of them are temperamentally hostile to the notion of 'progress'; it is felt that progress not only doesn't happen, but *ought not* to happen. . . .
>
> Our eyes are directed to Rome, to Byzantium, to Montparnasse, to Mexico, to the Etruscans, to the subconscious, to the solar plexus—to everything except the places where things are actually happening. . . .
>
> Why always the sense of decadence, the skulls and cactuses, the yearning after lost faith and impossible civilizations? Was it not, after all, *because* these people were writing in an

[1] *Ted Hughes: A Critical Study*. By TERRY GIFFORD and NEIL ROBERTS. Faber and Faber, £9.50. References to Keith Sagar's *The Art of Ted Hughes* are to the second, enlarged edition (Cambridge University Press, 1978).

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exceptionally comfortable epoch? It is just in such times that 'cosmic despair' can flourish."

Orwell's final point could easily be cheapened. But the point to take hold of is that the dangers of romantic retrospection and obscurantism are especially pressing if we feel deeply anxious about the course of modern civilisation. Soiling the intellectual conscience will not exorcise a Cartesian demon.

Nor does Hughes always avoid this danger. Here, for example, is the first extended quotation from Hughes in the book by Roberts and Gifford:

> "Any form of violence—any form of vehement activity—invokes the bigger energy, the elemental power circuit of the Universe. Once the contact has been made—it becomes difficult to control. Something from beyond ordinary human activity enters. When the wise men know how to create rituals and dogma, the energy can be contained. When the old rituals and dogmas have lost credit and disintegrated, and no new ones have been formed, the energy cannot be contained, and so its effect is destructive—and that is the position with us. And that is why force of any kind frightens our rationalistic, humanist style of outlook. In the old world God and divine power were invoked at any cost—life seemed worthless without them. In the present world we dare not invoke them—we wouldn't know how to use them or stop them destroying us. We have settled for the minimum practical energy and illumination—anything bigger introduces problems, the demons get hold of it. That is the psychological stupidity, the ineptitude, of the rigidly rationalist outlook—it's a form of hubris, and we're paying the traditional price. If you refuse the energy, you are living a kind of death. If you accept the energy, it destroys you. What is the alternative? To accept the energy, and find methods of turning it to good, of keeping it under control—rituals, the machinery of religion. The old method is the only one."[2]

Perhaps we would call this "visionary"; certainly, it is far removed from a Leavis or Valéry, or from the richly civilised, sceptically humanist "outlook" of Miroslav Holub or Zbigniew Herbert, two contemporary European poets Hughes greatly admires. Of course being "rigidly rationalist" is, by definition, a bad thing: in this usage "rigidly" *means* excessively. To be rigidly rational, like Euripides' Pentheus, is unwise, leads to atrophy and destruction: in other words, it is a species of

[2] The quotation is taken from Hughes's 1970 interview with Ekbert Faas, which appeared in *London Magazine* (January 1971) and is reprinted in Faas's own recent book on Hughes (see note 3).

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irrationality. But Hughes equates this with "our rationalistic, humanist" outlook in general, and his "wise men" sound rigidly irrational.

Roberts and Gifford introduce the passage with much flurried excitement:

> "It is, of course, a part of our sense of Hughes's greatness that his poetry says something important. We have spoken of a 'consistent inspiration.' What is this inspiration? What is the main unifying perception in his work?"

Having quoted the Hughes passage they comment with happy satisfaction that "This gives us a map of the territory of most of his major work"; they then go on to remark that the "most obvious problem" in the passage is "the word 'violence'." But that isn't true. The "most obvious problem" is the reiterated emphasis on the need for "rituals and dogma"—with its correlative attack on the "rationalist, humanist style of outlook" and the culminating insistence that "The old method is the only one." This very well illustrates what I mean by "romantic retrospection", and shows that "yearning after lost faith and impossible civilizations" which Orwell was right to distrust. Now if Roberts and Gifford yearn for rituals and dogma there are things they could do. They could become Roman Catholics for example, although they couldn't very well worship the White Goddess, since nobody ever did. But then I do not for one moment suppose that Roberts and Gifford *agree* with Hughes's conclusion—so how do they pass over it so easily? The answer, I suggest, is that although Hughes evidently meant what he said quite literally at the time of the interview, Gifford and Roberts take his meaning metaphorically.

IN GENERAL, literary critics are alarmingly ready to treat literal statements as metaphors and metaphors as literal statements; in the ensuing controversies they retrace the original confusion and, like Pope's ghostly ladies, haunt the places where their honour (in this case intellectual) died. For equity's sake, the next example of this can be provided by the first extended quotation from Hughes in Dr Sagar's book, with Sagar's approving comments. His Hughes passage is taken from an interview that appeared in *Vogue*, where it could ride the fashions as well as the anti-rational *Zeitgeist:*

> "And in fact this other rarely speaks or stirs at all, in the sort of lives we now lead. We have so totally lost touch, that we hardly realise he is absent. All we know is that somehow or other the great, precious thing is missing. And the real distress of our world begins there. The luminous spirit (maybe he is a crowd of spirits), that takes account of everything and gives everything its meaning, is missing. Not missing, just incommunicado. But here and there, it may be, we hear it.
>
> It is human, of course, but it is also everything else that lives. When we hear it, we understand what a strange thing is living in this Universe, and somewhere at the core of it—strange, beautiful, pathetic, terrible. Some animals and birds express this being pure and without effort, and then you hear the whole desolate, final actuality of existence in a voice, in a tone. There we really do recognise a spirit, a truth under all the truths. Far beyond human words. And the startling quality of this 'truth' is that it is terrible. It is for some reason harrowing, as well as being this utterly beautiful thing. Once when his spirits were dictating poetic material to Yeats, an owl cried outside the house, and the spirits paused. After a while one said: 'We like that sort of sound.' And that is it: 'that sort of sound' makes the spirits listen. It opens our deepest and innermost ghost to sudden attention. It is a spirit, and it speaks to spirit."

This enthralling passage, so subdued but excited in its rhythms and absorbed quietness of tone, might well make us feel we are eavesdropping. But what is so arresting about it is that it's patently not metaphorical: Hughes believes in the reality of those spirits. The retelling of the Yeats anecdote is startlingly matter-of-fact; one wonders whether Hughes would have been vexed or simply amused if, during his own period at Cambridge, he ever heard Leavis refer—wrily, and with the confidence that no elaboration was needed—to the "Silly Willy side of Yeats." Some readers of the Hughes passage will feel something like Leavis's protesting scepticism (which of course didn't prevent Leavis from regarding Yeats as a great poet); other readers—not so many, but that isn't critically significant—may be entirely convinced and feel they know the experience Hughes reports. If only it is honest and direct, either kind of response could show that "good faith" Lawrence demanded, when he wrote in his essay on Galsworthy that the critic "must have the courage to admit what he feels, as well as the flexibility to *know* what he feels."

Dr Sagar doesn't show good faith when he follows the Hughes passage with these remarks:

> "From the beginning Hughes is searching for a way of reconciling human vision with the energies, powers, presences, of the non-human cosmos. At first his main concern is to identify these energies and describe them, not only in human terms but in their own, that is in Nature's terms. And the discrepancy between these two descriptions gives the most powerful of his early poems, for example the hawk and jaguar poems, their characteristic tension. Hughes is also concerned to discover whether negotiations are

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possible between man and Nature, that is between man and his Creator, and, if so, why they have completely collapsed in our time and what the consequences of this collapse have been and may yet be."

Clearly, if Hughes can discover that "negotiations are possible between man and Nature" then they can't have "completely collapsed in our time." That is just the kind of slip nobody would make if real issues and real deducible consequences were in question: the terrifying gravity of the issues would compel greater attention. But Sagar is concerned with metaphorical issues and metaphorical consequences. The easy familiarity of his gloss on "between man and Nature"—"that is between man and his Creator"—exudes an air of happily unconscious make-believe. All that is distinctive and compelling in the Hughes passage is despatched with a deft flick of the lucid expositor's wrist: the spirits are diluted to familiar academic forms, while Hughes, after seeming so strange, seems suddenly, soothingly, like any other poet (Lawrence, for instance) who could be said to be "searching for a way of reconciling human vision with the energies, powers, presences, of the non-human cosmos." And other satisfactions are in store when we enter this entrancing realm of As If. We can play the evergreen Sheep and Goats game for instance, joyfully castigating those who won't worship Nature and "accept the Goddess"; or we can join in the Knocking Rationality game. We shan't need to ask what real commitments and consequences are signified by "accepting" the "Goddess", or how, if rationality has its limits, irrationality could ever perceive them. Indeed we can't ask such questions, since anybody who does is a Hubristic Rigid Rationalist and can't play.

To suppose that Dr Sagar *believes* in the "Creator" he invokes with such confidence, or that Roberts and Gifford *believe* they would be better off with "rituals and dogma", would show a misunderstanding of the idiom in which so much literary criticism is now written. That is why the idiom is trifling, and dangerous too.

I am well aware that Sagar, Roberts and Gifford are neither triflers nor dangerous men; nor would I feel so troubled by the reservations I have if I didn't also think that they have written the most important and substantial books on Hughes. Because Sagar's book is primarily exegetical, apostolic and coercive, it is particularly vulnerable; but then, besides including an exemplary bibliography it also supplies a great deal of very helpful information (some of which derives from Hughes himself) which cannot be obtained elsewhere. Gifford and Roberts are more critical and more circumspect: since their first concern is to find the best poems, their decision not to become enmeshed in discussions of shamanism, Jungian archetypes

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and the like is understandable and in some ways welcome. But this does mean that they, like Sagar, beg some of the important questions raised by Hughes's mythologising and by their own insistence that Hughes is a "visionary poet."

THE REAL MERITS of their study are the more striking in comparison with the recent books by Ekbert Faas and Stuart Hirschberg. Since I have already discussed Faas's *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe*[3] elsewhere I shall say no more about it here, beyond observing that when Faas berates "rationality" and "civilisation" in the name of instinct and blood-knowledge he might have asked himself, as a German-born American, whether he had not heard these strains before. Similar "orgies of a complicated naivety, outbreaks of a deep and ancient anti-reason" (I am borrowing some phrases from an essay Heinrich Mann wrote in 1915) occur in Hirschberg's turgid *Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes*,[4] and an English reader might reflect that he too has encountered this kind of thing in the copious literature on Lawrence's Dark Gods. So, Hirschberg explains, "through his animal poems Hughes immerses himself in the dark irrational forces around and within him in order to purge himself of the artificial social construct, the personality." Or again: "through violence, primitive contact with suppressed hatred and repressed aggression and even a kind of psychic self-mutilation, the sterile personality created by society is destroyed and the instinctual suppressed self can emerge liberated." The photograph of the author on the inside cover shows a kindly, smiling, well-fed man.

Does Hirschberg really mean it, or is he controlled by his critical idiom and propelled by procedures that have become all too familiar? We may characterise the procedure as follows. After assembling a great grid that is the trophy of his assiduous study of different mythologies, Hirschberg stealthily approaches an unsuspecting poem, bangs the grid on top of it, and reports on what shows through. So, in applying comments Hughes made on "Hawk Roosting" in 1970 to the poem, Hirschberg excitedly reports that the mention of "Isis" shows a "reinterpretation of the hawk as feminine", even though "no Egyptian, Indian, Scandinavian, Germanic or Hellenic myths identify the hawk as a feminine principle." But the hawk of Hughes's poem has no clearly assigned sex, and, so far as Hughes's comments in the interview are concerned, Hughes himself had supplied the relevant comment in explaining, "what I had in mind was that in this hawk Nature is thinking." Nature in mythologies is invariably feminine, just as the sun is almost invariably masculine. Gifford and Roberts do *read* the poems, carefully and attentively; Hirschberg turns them into incidental props in a queer shamanic scenario. So, we are told, in these early "animal poems" Hughes "establishes a mystical alliance and 'exchanges blood' with his animal familiars." A potentially interesting comparison between Hughes's and Lawrence's animal poems dissolves into fanciful nonsense: the trouble with Lawrence's is apparently that we always see the animals through his burdened human consciousness, but "Hughes, by contrast, submerges himself in the consciousness of the animal he is writing about." This is the language of As If again. Plainly, Hughes cannot submerge himself in an animal's consciousness, and if he could somehow do this *he* would be deprived of language.

Less obvious considerations are also in place, once we notice—as Hirschberg doesn't—that the unnerving power and wit of "Hawk Roosting" depends on the paradoxicality of the hawk's *speaking*. For Hughes's hawk there is but "one path", and the rest is digression. It has no "manners" and knows no dualism: from hooked head to hooked feet it is all of a piece—"locked" (in a sense that the poem, though not the hawk, invites us to ponder). The past-present-future axis that links our language to our sense of self presents no problems to the hawk, since it can only conceive of "Creation" as its creation and cannot conceive its own death. Lacking language and concepts, real hawks cannot "assert", but Hughes's hawk asserts that it does not assert: when it says "No arguments assert my right" having a "right" is suddenly and disconcertingly connected with *not* having words, or rather not needing them—since any such need would suggest uncertainty or weakness, the possibility of a doubt, question or countermand. But then, just as the hawk cannot see the craziness of its own solipsism ("The sun is behind me"!), it cannot see that without the word "right" and the controlling human need for such words there is no "right" but merely brute power. This hawk *borrows* human language to empty it of its non-descriptive, heuristic correspondence with human needs, while of course maintaining that such needs are perverse or contemptible deficiencies. Here is the germ of the idea that is to be developed with such compassionate intensity in *Cave Birds*: any empathetic impulse or imaginative sympathy with a suffering fellow creature represents a lapse in Nature's customarily efficient programming, or suggests, like *Buddenbrooks*, that consciousness increases when vitality decays. In these ways the ironies of "Hawk Roosting" sustain an extraordinary tension

[3] *Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe*. By EKBERT FAAS. With Selected Critical Writings by Ted Hughes & Two Interviews. Black Sparrow Press, £9.00. I reviewed this book in "Ted Hughes and the New Aesthetic", *Cambridge Quarterly*, vol. 10 no. 2 (1982).

[4] *Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes*. By STUART HIRSCHBERG. Wolfhound Press, £8.50.

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between what the bird says and what the poem itself reveals in displaying the vitality and freedom of creative imagination. The alarming apprehension—that if this hieratic, insouciant bird is Nature, human nature is indeed unaccommodated—is itself conveyed through a small miracle of human language. Which is another, more complicated way of saying that our concern is with the poem not a totem, with the poet's "thinking process" not shamanist "vision."

HUGHES'S LITERARY MYTHOLOGISING presents special difficulties for his critics, who rarely seem aware of the dangers of a precipitate, overconfident exegesis. In his chapter on *Crow* Dr Sagar appears to be tentative in identifying the "she" of "Crow's Undersong":

> "I don't want to suggest that the 'she' of 'Crow's Undersong' *is* Sophia or Ishtar or any other mythological figure. These myths testify to deep and permanent truths which the imaginative writer may rediscover quite independently."

In contrast, Sagar is quite uninhibited about recognising the woman who appears in *Gaudete* "tangled in the skin of wolves":

> "The woman is clearly 'the goddess of natural law and love who was the goddess of all sensation and organic life'. . . . She is Isis, mother of the gods, Graves' White Goddess. In psychological terms, she is Jung's Anima."

Taking Hughes seriously involves asking what kind of recognition is here in question. Actually, when Sagar italicises "is" in the first passage (which contrasts so sharply with "is clearly" in the second) this looks suspiciously like a routine gesture, particularly when we have noticed the well-informed discussion of fertility goddesses in the preceding paragraph. This isn't like identifying a friend, a criminal, or a Citroen. In Sagar's own case as in Hughes's or Graves's, the recognition depends, to a definite though indeterminable degree, on erudition that has been patiently and purposefully acquired. I certainly do not wish to maintain that this fact (and fact it is) must in itself be disqualifying. That would be an unhelpful line of argument, superciliously dogmatic and in its own way irrational. But it matters that our responses can never resemble those of the Assyrian for whom Ishtar was not a "mythological figure" or "motif", but a holy reality dwelling in the holy city of Erech. In his discussion of *Gaudete*, Sagar finds occasion to observe:

> "The Prologue now becomes increasingly phantasmagoric as Hughes draws freely on what

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> Jung calls 'the primordial images which have always been the basis of man's thinking—the whole treasure-house of mythological motifs'."

Sagar doesn't explain how we or Hughes or Jung gained access to the treasure-house, which might seem especially difficult if negotiations between man and Nature have "completely collapsed in our time." Apparently the psychic plumbing is still intact. It is evident, too, that being able to "draw freely" on the *whole* treasure-house shows a singular freedom from the constraints operating in the imagination and culture of the Assyrian who worshipped Ishtar.

The kinds of "freedom" and knowingness that are displayed in this critical idiom (and in Hughes's poetry too if we accept Sagar's account of it) might conceivably be represented, with pride, as hard-won advantages—opportunities for a humanism that could stand, as Thomas Mann put it in his essay on Freud, "in a different relation to the powers of the lower world, the unconscious, the id." Yet, paradoxically, Sagar is intent on denying any such notion of "progress", so that his arguments are riddled with internal contradictions that only go away if we agree to frolic in the land of As If without asking how we got there. And we had better notice, although this point requires a more careful elaboration than can be attempted here, that similar problems arise when Hughes himself insists that "The old method is the only one" and assails "the oppressive deadness of civilization, the spiritless materialism of it, the stupidity of it", or when he suggests, in his review of Max Nicholson's *The Environmental Revolution*, that "our Civilisation is an evolutionary error."[5]

Gifford and Roberts also direct attention to the Nicholson review, to Hughes's support for the Fauna Preservation Society, and to a letter on tree-planting Hughes wrote to *The Times Educational Supplement*—to illustrate their point that "Our account of Hughes's preoccupation with the 'goddess' would be misleading if we did not stress that it has its practical side." It is easy to see what point they want to make: how they make it is another matter, involving a rather revealing restriction on the sense of "practical." For their immediately preceding paragraph finished with this striking claim:

> "The goddess is not separate from the world of things, and she is present in the human unconscious, accessible to disciplined techniques of imagination, states of meditation, ecstasy, extremes of anguish or bliss."

If this were true it would have very "practical" consequences, affecting our understanding of the world of things, of the constitution of the mind, and of the efficacy of unspecified "techniques" of imagination. But the authors themselves seem ready to concede, in a casually inadvertent (and post-Cartesian) way, that this claim has no "practical side." What kind of consent could such propositions elicit, when it is unclear how much is being claimed or conceded?

LANGUAGE SHOWS where we are, not where we meant to be (although it may reveal that too). A little earlier in their study, Gifford and Roberts inform us that "The myth that . . . is the subject of Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* . . . holds, in a single imaginative unit, the total, inescapable character of reality, both beneficent and destructive." Something very heady is apparently on offer but, even if I knew how to, I don't think I'd want to play this game. It worries me, too, that although they use Graves to support their own arguments they do not scrutinise Graves's work with any closeness; the same is true of their use of other writers like Carlos Castaneda or the ubiquitous Idries Shah, whose pretensions were thoroughly exposed years ago in ENCOUNTER.[6] Over the page, Gifford and Roberts solemnly explain that the shaman's "experience is terrifying, and often entails dismemberment and the creation of a new body." To suppose that Gifford and Roberts believe that shamans are dismembered and reconstituted or that they fly or that their intestines turn to opal would, once again, show a misunderstanding of the critical idiom. Still, when I read on the next page that our "dealings with the inner life" are "barbaric" in comparison with the "sophistication of primitive cultures (and not only primitive cultures)", and that the "cultural patterns" of our society leave us "functionally incomplete", I do catch myself wanting to ask Gifford and Roberts how they feel *themselves* to be barbaric and functionally incomplete. (Such things are easily said of other people, of course; that game is played a lot.) It may be that they would explain what advantages an Australian aborigine enjoys, in some detail and with the confidence of the well informed. We might then want to ask whether any "functional incompleteness" they feel in themselves is not at least partly outweighed by the cultural advantages that permit this unreciprocated understanding of primitive cultures, or by the (presumably unimpaired) ability to follow Hughes's own "dealings with the inner life", or by the convenience of not having their urethras slit with a sharp stone.

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[5] Hughes's review of *The Environmental Revolution* appeared in *The Spectator*, 21 March 1970, and was later expanded in *Your Environment*, no. 3 (Summer 1970).

[6] See L. P. Elwell-Sutton's article, "Sufism & Pseudo-Sufism", in the May 1975 issue of ENCOUNTER.

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IT IS A TEASING SPECULATION, how differently Hughes's work might have developed if there had been more responsible and responsive critical dialogue. There are no lines of communication between, say, A. Alvarez and David Holbrook: the one is delighted, the other appalled, by Hughes's alleged "nihilism", and both ignore the evidence—in *Wodwo*, *Cave Birds*, a few *Crow* poems and many of the poems in *Moortown*—of a complex and disturbed, yet generous and compassionate humanity.[7] Quasi-theological intensities have clouded critical discussion. Faas's book enlists Hughes in the cause of primitivism, anti-rationalism and flip barbarism; in its less deliberate, more unthinking way Hirschberg's reveals the same tendency, while reminding us that Hughes, like Blake and Yeats, is now the object of academic-industrial exegesis. There is some sane and searching criticism, for example in a few precious pages of Seamus Heaney's *Preoccupations*, in Geoffrey Thurley's *The Ironic Harvest*, and in the book by Gifford and Roberts once they get down to discussing the poems; but some problematic aspects of Hughes's development are quietly dodged.[8] Some critics who were sympathetic to earlier volumes have become impatient and dismissive, like Philip Hobsbaum and John Newton (who now thinks Hughes "not a poet at all"); others show impatience with the early work and fret to get to *Crow*. The essays we might long to read—by, for example, and for very different reasons, Leavis, E. R. Dodds, Zbigniew Herbert and Joseph Campbell—have not been written. Hughes's publishers have not helped, where they could have done so, by collecting his essays and reviews; these are at present scattered and will be sought out only by the diligent. It is distressing that an essay like "Myth and Education" is so little known; whenever such a collection does appear it will, I am sure, shake many preconceptions, and will also make it easier to trace the extent to which the unhappy state of Hughes criticism reflects fertile creative tensions and less welcome contradictions within Hughes's own *œuvre*.

The passage on "rituals and dogma" which Gifford and Roberts quote at the outset of their study seems to me most telling, not for the reasons they suggest, but because it encourages a facile irrationality, nostalgic primitivism, and a sweep-

[7] See A. Alvarez's all too influential introduction to *The New Poetry* (Penguin, 1962) and David Holbrook's chapter on Hughes in *Lost Bearings in English Poetry* (Vision Press, 1977), which contains some breathtakingly impertinent speculations on Hughes's supposed psychological afflictions.

[8] See Geoffrey Thurley's *The Ironic Harvest* (Edward Arnold, 1974) and Seamus Heaney's *Preoccupations* (Faber and Faber, 1980).

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ingly dismissive attitude towards "civilisation." In the long and subtle analysis of *Four Quartets* which concludes *The Living Principle*, Leavis writes of a paradoxical self-contradiction in Eliot: "he denies life's essential creativity, though committed to vindicating by creative means his *ahnung* of a spiritual reality he posits as the only escape." There are occasions on which Hughes himself seems unwilling to recognise, or determined to misrepresent, the source and significance of his own creativity. This appears in some of his poems and critical remarks on artists, when Hughes is intent on separating the artist from any positively beneficial, sustaining culture; instead the artist is seen as an eruptive force, a shaman-like seer who communicates with the spirits and powers in isolation from the tribe. In this respect the early, overrated "Thrushes" is both silly and ominously revealing, when it compares "Mozart's brain" with the shark's innate releasing mechanism. A few years later, in reviewing T. C. Lethbridge's *Ghost and Divining Rod*, Hughes compares "involuntary transmission" with the effortless way "Mozart heard his music."[9] Mozart's genius was neither shark-like nor divine, but was rooted in a rich human culture; notwithstanding the final stanza of "Thrushes" ("With man it is otherwise . . ."), Mozart was a man. Only the poem doesn't want and can't afford to allow any pondering of the relation between the creative genius and a sustaining communal culture.

The following passage from Hughes's 1964 review of Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism* is still more revealing, since poetic creativity is in question:

> "The initiation dreams, the general schema of the shamanic flight, and the figures and adventures they encounter, are not a shaman monopoly: they are, in fact, the basic experience of the poetic temperament we call 'romantic.' In a shamanizing society, 'Venus and Adonis', some of Keats' longer poems, 'The Wanderings of Oisin', 'Ash Wednesday', would all qualify their authors for the magic drum. . . . The shamans seem to undergo, at will and at phenomenal intensity, and with practical results, one of the main regenerating dramas of the human psyche: the fundamental poetic event."[10]

Any literary merits in a shaman's utterance are incidental and accidental; this is not the case with the "shamanising" poets, and here we see the shift from what Lawrence called "art speech" to what

[9] Hughes's review of *The Ghost and Divining Rod* appeared in *New Statesman*, 2 October 1964. It included some characteristic remarks on "rationality", which, we are told, is "having a bad time."

[10] Hughes's review of *Shamanism* appeared in *The Listener*, 29 October 1964.

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Hughes's critics call "vision." Moreover the poems are reduced and schematised: the unwittingly reductive emphasis on a "general schema", "basic experience", "the fundamental poetic event" is oddly and incongruously reminiscent of Northrop Frye. Using such methods we may demonstrate the "basic" affinity between *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Peter Rabbit*, which so wonderfully illustrates the tripartite nuclear unit (separation, *limen*, reaggregation) common to Hero stories, *rites de passage* and shamanic initiation procedures: but where do we, and more important, where does the poet, go from there?

Hughes's preoccupation with shamanism and his associated reliance on Gravesean and Jungian assumptions creates special difficulties for the reader. In one sense the difficulty is familiar. Most of the literature we read and admire is rooted in Graeco-Roman and Christian assumptions we no longer share; what kind of imaginative engagement is possible and proper in these circumstances is one of the more important, and less discussed, problems of literary criticism. But here we have two special difficulties. First, unless we believe that primordial images and autochthonous totems somehow work on us like thrown switches (in which case the Esso advertisement may move us more powerfully than Blake's tiger), much of the mythic material Hughes deploys so brilliantly is alien in a way that the Christian myth isn't. Second, the Gravesean and Jungian assumptions encourage the irrationality I have been concerned to criticise for reasons that are not merely, nor even primarily, literary. Both Hughes's indebtedness to *The White Goddess* and the associated antirationality appear in his essay on Shakespeare, when he follows Graves in regarding Prospero as a sinister hubristic puritanical Rigid Rationalist intent on suppressing Nature, the Goddess, and Caliban.[11] I find Caliban the more frightening figure; but then my fears for my children's future don't issue from a belief that there is an excess of rationality in our troubled times.

[11] Compare Graves's remarks on *The Tempest* in chapter 24 of the *The White Goddess* (Faber and Faber, 1961) with Hughes's introduction to *A Choice of Shakespeare's Verse* (Faber and Faber, 1971); the American edition of this anthology appeared as *With Fairest Flowers While Summer Lasts* (Doubleday, 1971).

The Human Abstract

Wordsworth, Ruskin & "Art"—By ROSEMARY JACKSON

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain
Blake, "The Human Abstract",
in *Songs of Experience*

TOLSTOY once wrote that Ruskin was "one of those rare men who think with their hearts", but after reading the latest publications on his life and work, alongside those on Wordsworth and the Romantics, I'd find it much closer to the truth to say that both he and Wordsworth felt with their heads. For the traditional view that there was a great realignment in the Romantic period, from intellectual to emotional life, from rationality to inspiration and imagination, tends to obscure the atrophy of human feeling amongst the "great" poets. Behind the myth of Wordsworth and Ruskin as artists committed to celebrating the life of the working man, behind the image of their benevolent "humanism", lies a distortion of experience and an abstraction in the name of the "human" which is its own guarantee of ineffectuality and indifference.

A recent collection of essays rehearses the commonest clichés and platitudes about Romanticism. The cover blurb of *The Romantics*[1] claims that "The study of English literature is no longer the ivory tower activity it was once thought to be", yet its contents prove precisely the opposite, if for ivory tower one substitutes the redbrick, white tile, and grey concrete of the newer universities, for it is a collection embedded in a predictable mould of academic discipline. All the authors are male (except one fine-art historian) members of the University of Sussex, reproducing potted versions of literary and social history, some philosophical wanderings and a spuriously vague gesturing towards political events. An interdisciplinary approach is purely nominal, for there is no interactive dialogue between them, the net result being a superficial, factual contextualisation of the major Romantic writers. A chauvinistic confinement of everything to the shores of Albion omits any awareness of European Romanticism, while pop-

[1] *The Romantics*. Edited by STEPHEN PRICKETT. Methuen, £9.50, paper £4.95.

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ular movements and revolutionary writings are reduced to mere abstractions in the history of ideas: Blake is little more than a Swedenborgian consummation, Wordsworth an avowed Hartleian in the Lockean empiricist tradition.

This kind of reductive homogenising of different figures is avoided in *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765–1830*,[2] a much more sophisticated and radical exploration of the various social, historical and cultural constructions of meaning in the Romantic period. Again it is limited to English shores and again it excludes women's writing—the contributors are male faculty from the University of East Anglia—and surprisingly, for work ostensibly challenging the canon of set texts, it has only incidental reference to Mary Shelley's explosive Gothic novel, *Frankenstein*. There is, though, a deep awareness of problems of sexuality and of representations of women throughout the book, particularly in David Aers' sensitive readings of Blake and of Wordsworth. Against the naive kind of panegyrics found in Prickett's criticism, lauding Wordsworth's "great" and "original" poetry because it is great and original, the analyses by Aers, Cook and Punter bring us back to earth. Despite the Romantic portrait of the artist as a superior being outside history, such as Coleridge's: "The truly great/Have all one age . . . Time is not with them", none of them was above confusion or history, as Aers makes explicit. He argues that only in the midst of worldly activities can a change of consciousness be effected which will enable us to move towards fullness as human beings, and this involves every sphere of life, small as well as "sublime." "The most intimate areas of life", he writes, are tied to "the total socio-political structures within which life has to be led."

From this perspective, Wordsworth, who set himself above the world, leaving the mind practically disembodied and independent of the many social relations which alone make fully human activity possible, is far from the "man speaking to men" he claimed to be. He abstracted "the common man" into a mere type in the mind. Even Blake, Aers claims, moved towards generalised symbolic figures in *Jerusalem*, but he was much more aware than Wordsworth of the vital importance of the *specific* human identity, the *particular* relationship. Blake refused that dissolving of difference into a unified humanity or mankind which vaguely strolls through Wordsworth's work, which is perhaps one reason for Blake's uneasy assimilation into a neat Romantic movement, as if all the poets of the period were birds of one transcendental feather. Blake never ceased to oppose abstraction, for "Abstraction serves domination and manipulation", writes Aers, avoiding "the potential multiplicity of unique energies and forms of life, a multiplicity of which the conservative mind is always terrified."

DAVID PIRIE's rather dry study of Wordsworth[3] sees his pull towards the impersonal as a temptation away from close personal contacts. Taking for his starting point and title some lines from *The Prelude*,

> *Two feelings have we also from the first*
> *of grandeur and of tenderness;*
> *We live by admiration and by love . . .*

his thesis is that Wordsworth was divided between a love of the sublime landscape and a love and need for nourishing human relations, but it's hard to see why these have to be posed in opposition to one another. Wordsworth's first love, though, was for *unpeopled* landscapes and when he did come back down the mountain, it was to transform the particular person into emblem or idea of himself. People—working, moving, speaking—are reduced to stillness and silence so that he, the poet, may animate and speak for them. As David Perkins wrote in 1964, "Nature was loved as a reality, man as an ideal." A farmer becomes an abstract noun, an old man is transformed into "animal tranquillity and decay", a leech gatherer into an abstract embodiment of "Resolution" and "Independence", a blind beggar becomes "a type or emblem of the utmost that we know." Prickett continues this tradition of dehumanising, departicularising and removing an historical context when he writes comments such as "Wordsworth's rustics are valuable not for their rusticity but for their universality." The poetry reveals almost shamelessly a tendency to give landscape priority over people when it describes

> *Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men*
> *Whom I already loved;—not verily*
> *For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills*
> *Where was their occupation and abode.*

Others are the stuff of which the poet's dreams are made. He turns from their sufferings as "an idle dream", "And walked along my road in happiness." As Coleridge generously put it, Wordsworth was capable only of "feeling *for*, but never *with* his characters." Again, in Coleridge's words, "The natural *tendency* of [Wordsworth's] mind is to great objects and elevated conceptions." Where, one wonders, is the egalitarianism which Prickett praises?

That an abstracting of individual lives is contagious, spreading from poet to critic, is evident in

[2] *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765–1830*. By DAVID AERS, JONATHAN COOK, DAVID PUNTER. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £6.95.

[3] *William Wordsworth: The Poetry of Grandeur and of Tenderness*. By DAVID B. PIRIE. Methuen, £14.95.

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Pirie's remarks on the solitary figures in Wordsworth's poetry, remarks which bear within themselves their own blatant ignorance about human suffering in the name of talking about "humanity":

> "At times the Solitaries are, like Betty, explicitly human. Their appearance . . . still appeals to us for recognition, daring us to look further and see that even the most peculiar-looking people are indeed people and must suffer from feelings like our own."

IT'S A MARVELLOUS RELIEF to turn from such indifferent abstractions to the richly specific writings of Dorothy Wordsworth. Through Elizabeth Gunn's portrait of Dorothy[4]—at times antiquated and euphemistic in tone—a deep sense of the immense cultural difference separating male from female experience emerges. "Dorothy's work was William", she says, and the picture is one of complete dependence, as he would later lean on his wife, Mary. Materially—cooking, cleaning, organising, entertaining, preparing manuscripts, tidying—and intellectually, Dorothy was indispensable to her brother. He acknowledged that, with Coleridge, Dorothy was "one to whom my intellect is most indebted." Both Wordsworth and Coleridge "borrowed" from Dorothy's journals after 1798, and many images, ideas, words, were reabsorbed and reproduced as their own.

Dorothy's Grasmere journals are powerful records of experience precisely because of their specific and concrete observation of everyday events and people: no grandeur or elevation, simply a celebration of the wealth of the everyday. Writing and reading were, of necessity, not set apart—they were an integral part of kaleidoscopic activity. Thus one day in May 1800 she records: "bound carpets, mended old clothes. Read Timon of Athens. Dried linen. Molly weeded the turnips, John stuck the peas." Her eye for detail is unobscured by a need to abstract from the specific—"the pear trees [are] a bright yellow, the apple trees green still"—and it is this "passion for the particular" which gives to her writing its unstrained immediacy and imagery without artifice: "The moon", she writes, "shone like herrings in the water." This is especially true of her records of meetings with unremarkable men and women—the many gipsies, beggars, workers, peopling her journals.

This recording of ordinary incidents, untransmuted into "art" can, of course, lapse into the banal and become an almost parodic fiction of domestic disasters. It's good to have the superman images of Wordsworth and Coleridge deflated, but it perhaps doesn't take us much further to learn of the boils on Coleridge's neck and his constipation *en route* to Hamburg in 1804, or to know that Dorothy burnt the carrots, or munched cold mutton and pickles while reading Ben Jonson. Nevertheless, it's a corrective to an over-solemn reading of these poets as elevated mortals. And it's sobering to remember the immense personal cost to Dorothy of this devotion to Wordsworth. Her own relation to language became tenuous: she found herself slipping further into silence. An entry of 1813 admits sadly that "much of the knowledge gained from books" has become futile:

> "I find reading far less use than it used to be to me . . . were it not that my feelings were as much alive as ever there would be a growing tendency for the mind to barrenness."

Her years of self-sacrifice to her brother culminated in "going mad." Elizabeth Gunn tries to sustain the elegiac tone of her study by denying that this illness was a psychic revolt against Wordsworth and ascribes it to purely physiological grounds of arterial sclerosis. Yet it seems more than coincidence that Dorothy had frequently

[4] *A Passion for the Particular: Dorothy Wordsworth, A Portrait.* By ELIZABETH GUNN. Victor Gollancz, £12.50.

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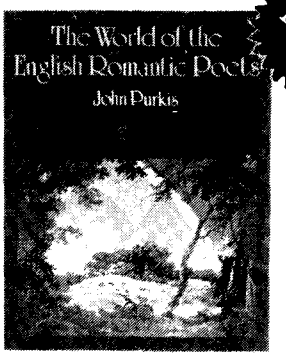

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mentioned her sense of identification with Mary Lamb—Charles Lamb's sister, who rebelled against years of domestic imprisonment by stabbing her mother to death, and was periodically institutionalised—and that on the day following Wordsworth's death, Dorothy temporarily recovered her mental faculties.

Be that as it may, none of the Romantics has much ground for pride in his treatment of women. Elizabeth Gunn's book includes telling references to Southey's wife suffering from "madness", and to Coleridge's terrible treatment of Sara, being too absorbed in the composition of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to share her sorrow over the death of one of their children. It's not surprising, then, to find that the beautifully produced collection of letters between William and Mary Wordsworth[5] produces a public image of marital bliss and mutual devotion by being highly selective. It includes newly discovered correspondence between man and wife from 1810 and 1812, celebrating the joys of married life like a strictly edited postscript to the Royal Wedding. It has to push into the background sordid political details—1812 mill riots in Nottinghamshire, unemployment, personal breakdowns of friends and relationships—and it ends with the death of their lame daughter Catherine, from which point their marriage deteriorated. Still, it is a handsomely presented volume, containing, for all its sentimental package, some convincingly moving declarations of love and concern.

IT WOULD BE HARD to find a more tragic example of the dangers of male egotism and abstract idealism—or a more suitable case for treatment—than John Ruskin. Charles Eliot Norton described Ruskin as "a white-winged anachronism" and, much more so than Wordsworth, he was peculiarly out of joint with history, divorced from any sense of community and sadly incapable of close personal relations. The dominant impression of Ruskin, from John Dixon Hunt's meticulously researched and very rewarding biography,[6] is best summarised by Couttet's comment on him aged twenty-six: "*le pauvre enfant—il ne sait pas vivre.*" Living was an art he never learnt. His life reads, in fact, as a debilitating fiction of isolation, from his birth in 1819, through a strictly religious upbringing, to his academic success, becoming Slade Professor in 1870. Hunt suggests that Ruskin's destiny was already fixed by the age of eighteen, with an "unnerving separation of intellectual and emotional life"—he even split his diary into two parts, "one for intellect, another for feeling"—a general petrifaction of the heart which never ended. His mother, strangling him with the "chrysalid envelope" of her possessiveness, even accompanied him to Oxford, reporting in a letter home that "his feelings seem dead enough", and her strict maternal eye never left him. (What else, one asks, did she have?)

Ruskin's private confessions of loneliness and confusion are, despite their pathetic self-indulgence, deeply disturbing. He wrote that "a fountain of pure conceit springs in my heart." Sensing his "unfitness for life in society", his "luxurious selfishness", he tipped his narcissism back into the world in an obsessive study of anything inanimate, and made no attempt to hide his preference for a world without people, for art without figures. "I find the study of the figure in art, and of human interests in literature, wholly incompatible with the pursuit of landscape." It brings to mind Wordsworth's reluctance to admit human chaos into an otherwise tranquil setting:

> *Why should we thus . . .*
> *feeding on disquiet . . . disturb*
> *The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?*
> *The Excursion*

Behind Ruskin's prolific writings on art and architecture, there is a deliberate turning away from people to places of unmoving bricks and rubble. He loved ruins and fragments, restlessly working through projects and plans in art, architecture, painting, literature, history, archaeology, geology, botany, collecting miscellaneous fragments of knowledge and ideas. His relatively revolutionary defence of Turner's painting and his love of colour and form suggest that Ruskin was really a frustrated painter (among other things), and that had this outlet been permitted him his vast energies might have found a more positive form. He himself lamented bitterly the negative, strait-jacketed existence his education and upbringing had been to him, "a bodily and intellectual injury, which nothing can ever do away with or compensate for."

Ruskin's frantic intellectual industry was the sole means he found to give him validity, for he and others sensed his deep personal inadequacy and his inability to change. "I find no change in myself from a boy", he writes. "I am exactly the same creature—in temper—in likings—in weaknesses." Immature, indulged, egotistical, Ruskin was hardly capable of having a relationship with his nominal wife, Effie Gray. Their marriage, in April 1848, was never consummated—Hunt believes this was less to do with Ruskin's panic at the sight of Effie's pubic hair than with revulsion at the fact of her menstruating (such is the requisite detail of post-Freudian biography); but this clearly relates to

[5] *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth.* Edited by BETH DARLINGTON. Chatto & Windus, £10.95.

[6] *The Wider Sea: A Life of John Ruskin.* By JOHN DIXON HUNT. Dent, £15.95.

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Ruskin's *fears*: of women, self-loss, castration. . . . Meantime, what are the effects on Effie?

Hunt's study is extremely sensitive to the position of women, and he includes Effie's voice to tell of her responses to the difficulties of being with Ruskin. The fragments from her letters make tantalising reading, for her prose, though very different from Dorothy Wordsworth's, has a vivacity, colour and humour totally lacking in her husband's. "Deep in his Stones", he had little time for her, or for domestic matters. Thus Effie writes sardonically from Venice in 1851, that "talents have been wisely distributed . . . a man who can write the Seven Lamps is not fit to choose a fire grate"; later, describing his obsessive Italian researches, "I do not think they have made up their minds yet whether he is very mad or very wise . . . he is . . . climbing about the capitals covered with dust, or else with cobwebs. . . ." Ruskin did realise that there was "something wrong" in being more concerned about 13th-century ruins than "any domestic calamity", but, Casaubon-like, he stuck to his researches. Effie's observations, first rueful, then bitter, are astute.

> "He wishes to satisfy his intellect and his vanity . . . he does not pray that his mind and heart may be softened. . . . His whole desire for knowledge appears to me to originate in Pride . . . [and he is] doing everything to please himself."

Following Effie's unsurprising involvement with Millais and her disappearance, Ruskin's life lost whatever vicarious colour she had given it, and he sank deeper into misanthropy, depression and inner isolation. His journal reads like the diary of a madman, raving like Timon of Athens against everyone and everything, from writing—"Paper is but dirty rags that may have been lying upon a dunghill cleaned and stuck together"—to society—"Operas, drawing rooms and living creatures have become alike nuisances to me"—to the poor—"stupid and vile beggars come at me like wasps at a rotten nectarine." His "gloomy fight with Things and Myself" in his final years culminated in mental breakdown in 1889, which lasted until his death in 1900, his blackness being punctuated only by selective memories of a nostalgically viewed childhood and the familiar anodyne of paper work, that very work, writes Hunt, "by which he tried to stave off collapse", but which "finally ensured it."

AGAINST THESE FACTS of his life, ideas about Ruskin's writings and their cultural implications need to be reviewed. Like Wordsworth, Ruskin had an abstract knowledge of "the working man", and a rather fanciful notion of the relation between beautiful things and political economy ("Terribly mixed work in my head—sentiment, art, and economy", he wrote in 1871), but this was hardly unexpected from someone who never had to earn his living, and who, while England was in the throes of Chartism and unemployment, was running around Italy collecting pebbles and charting different colours of sky and stones. The 1848 revolutions were, for him, an "annoyance" necessitating the postponement of his wedding trip. He had no means of resisting the Philistine world of contemporary culture and its shallow materialism, and his withdrawal into aesthetic investigations was, consequently, highly fanciful. His descriptions of Gothic architecture, for example, in his famous essay "The Nature of Gothic", are too generalised to be accurate and are centred upon a completely mistaken understanding of the material realities behind Gothic constructions. He condescendingly championed the workmen who built such cathedrals as Cologne, Laon, Salisbury, seeing their creative spirits expressed in the building. Not, however, he stresses, that we should expect too much of such labour, as it reveals the "vulgar mind" and "coarsest wit", but we must learn to cultivate "feeling and charity enough to join in the rude sportiveness of hearts that have escaped out of prison." John Unrau's excellent essay, "Ruskin, the Workman and the Savageness of Gothic", in an otherwise pedantic academic anthology on

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Ruskin,[7] exposes Ruskin's fantasy of working experience. Ruskin forgets (or, rather, never knows) the realities behind Gothic splendours: press-gang recruiting of cheap labour, constant strife between constructors and Church employers, low life-expectancy through inhalation of stone dust, low wages. Unrau writes barbedly of Ruskin's casual sense of this work as recreative leisure. The tone of Ruskin's essay, notes Unrau, is "close to what we might expect from a group of sentimental but squeamish matrons watching the chimpanzees' tea-party at the zoo."

A sense of futility comes from reading the last parts of Hunt's impressive biography of Ruskin, a sense akin to what Ruskin described in Turner as "a terrific wrongness and sadness", and leads to a profound questioning of the costs of his academic success and superiority to history. To quote David Aers again, "The most intimate areas of life" are bound to "the total socio-political structures within which life has to be led." The neglect of such intimacy in the name of idealism (Wordsworth's "Glorious faculty/Which higher minds bear with them as their own"), or intellectual abstraction, or even "art", is not without its price—as the women in the lives of these writers bore witness.

[7] *New Approaches to Ruskin: Thirteen Essays*. Edited by ROBERT HEWISON. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £10.95.

Backwards & Forwards

Recent Fiction—By PENELOPE LIVELY

SAUL BELLOW's *The Dean's December*[1] is a novel that sets one thinking about fictional time structure. Other reviewers have been exercised by its performance as a vehicle for Bellow's ideas—on East-West dichotomies, on urban decay, on public life and private people—but one of its major curiosities, it seems to me, as well as one of its crafts, is the way in which whole belts of time are slotted into the span of the few weeks which cover the events (or at least the superficial events) of the plot.

Corde, the central figure, a professor of journalism and Dean of Students in Chicago, accompanies his Rumanian-born wife Minna, an astronomer, to Bucharest to be near her dying mother. Corde, with nothing much to do except observe and sympathise and meet up with an old journalistic associate who happens also to be out there, ruminates, especially on the current trial in Chicago of a couple of blacks whose indictment for the murder of one of his students he has been partly instrumental in securing. The mother dies; the couple are found guilty. That is all that has happened. But around and above and below this central framework Bellow has constructed an elaborate extension that, with the effortlessness that conceals great skill, carries the reader to and fro between Chicago and Bucharest, and backwards and forwards in time. It makes nonsense of the supposition that the novel is a linear form, that one thing follows another, that one event arises from another. Corde's reflections plunge the reader back into his own history, into recent American history, into the tortuous events of the murder and the even more complex social ancestry that lies behind it. Within a chapter, within a paragraph, we roam from one decade to another, from one continent to another. For every hour that is advanced in the story, a dozen years are uncovered. And of course as a literary device there is nothing new in this; it has been used by all the major novelists, especially linked as here to a dominant central character. At its most simple, it is the flashback technique of the cinema; but what Bellow is doing with it here is something much more subtle. He is using it to underpin the deceptively straightforward happenings of his story—the death of an old woman, a piece of random urban violence. He is demonstrating the iceberg quality of human experience: below what is visible lies that huge submerged mass without which the thing would capsize, the explanation without which nothing can be understood. And such underpinnings and extensions defy the laws of chronology; the past exists, certainly, but it exists in such a way that what is at issue is its very pastness: to make sense of time—to make fictional sense of time—you must treat it as a kaleidoscope. And that is one of the things that Bellow is doing with this novel; he is using its very structure to make a point about the deceptions of appearance.

Corde is under attack back in Chicago—from his nephew who is a friend of one of the blacks under trial for murder, and from his cousin who is acting as defence lawyer; also, and more significantly, from the media and from his own college

[1] *The Dean's December*. By SAUL BELLOW. Harper & Row, $13.95; The Alison Press/Secker & Warburg, £7.95.

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because of a series of articles he has written castigating the squalor and nihilism of the city and the corruption of its administration. In Bucharest, as old Valeria slowly dies and her somewhat otherworldly daughter copes with the malevolence of the authorities and the solicitude of friends and relations, he reconstructs what he has said and done, places himself within the context of the society: "a Midwesterner flattened out by the prairies, a journalist and a lousy college dean." Observation of the faces and styles of Bucharest, a city on the hinge of Europe, sets him thinking of the comparable racial soup of Chicago, to which he owes a debt: "It was in Chicago after all that he, a Huguenot-Irish-Midwesterner and whatnot else, found the Macedonian-Armenian-Turkish-Slav woman who was exactly what he had been looking for."

Corde's preoccupations are legion: the wretched "superfluous populations" of cities like Chicago, the weaknesses and hypocrisies of American society and the complementary sophistries and cynicisms of totalitarianism, the possible culpability of lead as a basis of social disorder, the betrayal of humanity by science, the survival of "the archaic standard" in Europe—the acceptance of affliction as the ground of existence. We are told that "Corde was a terrific reader; he had read far too much"; but he is also an indefatigable observer—even at the height of his irritations and stresses in Bucharest he is still noting the rusty-orange tramcars, cast-iron sinks, croaking pull-chain toilets, and twitching again at the tidinesses of chronology: "It was all like looking backwards. You saw the decades in reverse." His journalistic eye merges with authorial insight and reportage, giving the book the robustness and immediacy of real feeling.

A vehicle for ideas it may be—and undeniably it is—but the ideas are seductively packaged. The settings are never less than sharply defined, sometimes brilliantly, as in the account of the cold (just the right temperature for growing cyclamens . . .), archaically furnished apartment of Minna's family in Bucharest, the blighted landscape of Chicago—"many, many square miles of civil Passchendaele or Somme", the cultural rainbow of the courtroom scene:

> ". . . child molesters, shoplifters, smackheads, purse snatchers, muggers, rapists, arsonists, wife-beaters, car thieves, pimps. . . . People were all dressed up. . . . Young men wore high-waisted flaring leatherette coats and high, puffed, long-billed caps; red-and-yellow wooden platform shoes, or Wild Bill Hickok dude boots; or criss-crossed their shins with candy-box ribbons. They wore dashikis, ponchos, cloaks, African amulets, rings and beads—symbolic ornaments symbolising nothing."

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And the language of Corde's polemics is equally intense, whether he is lecturing himself or engaged in raking over the ashes of old ideals with Dewey Spangler, a colleague and boyhood associate and now a successful international columnist who turns up in Bucharest and, in the end, subtly betrays Corde.

And yet, for all its vigour, *The Dean's December* has its *longueurs*. The price that has to be paid for this wayward (and also brilliant) treatment of fictional chronology is a narrative disjointedness that gives the reader a somewhat uneasy passage. It is not that you have lost your way, but that the piling of revelations upon explanation induces a sense of repletion; you need to stop and take a rest. Having made it, such a complaint seems frivolous; there are not that many fictional chroniclers of ideas around on either side of the Atlantic. This is a rich book, and if it sometimes provokes, that is one of its strengths.

THE PLEASURES of Penelope Fitzgerald's novels are stylistic; there are few who can match her when it comes to the nailing of a character in a few words, the turn of phrase that brings a person or a place smoking off the page, the wry comment that sums up a situation. *At Freddie's*,[2] like *Human Voices* and *Offshore*, does not bother much with plot but offers instead a string of elegantly contrived episodes involving a group of people caught up in an institution: in *Offshore* the institution was the eccentric society of Thames barges; *Human Voices* beautifully satirised the wartime BBC; *At Freddie's* is concerned with the oddities and humanities of a stage school. Freddie herself, the proprietress, is "one of those few people . . . whom society has mysteriously decided to support at all costs." She is also one of those women whose power overflows her physical presence: for the most part immobile in an office, where "even her extent was uncertain, since the material of her skirts and the chair seemed much the same", she manipulates and negotiates the theatrical world. Such narrative as the novel has is concerned with her attempts to save the school from closing down; since it has apparently always existed on a financial brink, one assumes that this kind of thing has happened before. One knows also that Freddie will survive. We have after all been told that.

And so, the framework established, the author can get down to some graceful and good-natured comedy. She is particularly good on the wizened youth of theatrical children, corrupted by their trade until they can barely distinguish between fact and fantasy—Dickensian children, and rightly given Dickensian centrality in the novel. Two of them—a prematurely worldly lad called Mattie, and the younger, and genuinely talented, Jonathan—are involved in a production of *King John* which gives Mrs Fitzgerald the opportunity for a lot of wry fun; on the problems of producing the play at all ("Directors realise that audiences are not likely to have much grip on Shakespeare's *King John*. . . .") and then with the engaging lunacies of a presentation in Edwardian dress in which Shakespeare's court is a lavish billiard room at Sandringham and the red-hot pincers are ingeniously battery-powered, fading from red to black. The attitudinising Mattie meets his match in a ham old actor called Boney ("No emotion can be so pure as the hatred you feel for a child"); and Hannah, the young teacher at the school whose half-hearted love affair with a colleague is the other central strand in the plot, gets a glimpse of the world of the real stage. At the end of the book we leave Jonathan, jumping off a wall over and over again, alone, in rehearsal for his role. This last is a moving moment; Mattie, it is hinted, is heading for commercial success, but it is Jonathan who has the lonely gift of artistic dedication. The ambivalences of the theatre are suggested here and there throughout the book: that strange mix of seriousness and vulgarity, of art and artifice, of the sublime and the meretricious. Indeed, they are personified by Freddie herself in whose complex character integrity and guile comfortably coexist. I did once or twice have the feeling that beyond the surface skills (and they are considerable) of *At Freddie's* a more serious book was lurking: that, given a more vigorous narrative intention and without the affectionately treated but ultimately inessential romantic sub-plot it might have become quite another book.

That being said, *At Freddie's* is full of treats. Penelope Fitzgerald is a thoroughly English writer; her talent has all those English qualities of understatement and irony and lightness of touch—qualities which can be mistaken for an underlying failure of purpose. This is to misinterpret: at their most powerful they are lethal (Kingsley Amis, Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell); *At Freddie's* is not forceful in that way because it does not set out to be. Its strength is to use this kind of deft—and deceptively laconic—manner to create fiction that is wonderfully entertaining and in which style and content achieve a perfect harmony.

[2] *At Freddie's*. By PENELOPE FITZGERALD. Collins, £6.50.

[3] *The Country Of Her Dreams*. By JANICE ELLIOTT. Hodder & Stoughton, £6.95.

I KEPT THINKING, reading *The Country Of Her Dreams*,[3] that narrative skill is extraordinarily underrated. We expect the novelist to tell a story

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(well, most novelists) and sit back to enjoy the ride; if it is a bumpy one we do not always question the basic framework. And by that I do not mean the structure of the plot, which can creak a little without foundering the whole venture, but the more subtle business of the unobtrusive organisation that is going to keep the reader turning the pages over in the first place. Those who are in the trade know only too well that creative despair is seldom induced by the intransigence of one's characters or deficiencies of inspiration about where to put them and when: the problem is what they are to do next, and how to tell it. Some writers never master the skill; others seem to achieve it by instinct. Janice Elliott, in this latest novel, tells the story with that high professionalism that makes it all look easy, and it is a measure of her success that the reader happily ignores the odd creak of the plot because, quite simply, it is necessary to find out what happens: you have to keep on turning the pages.

A HAPPILY MARRIED COUPLE, Nicholas and Mary Lamb, attend with cronies and acquaintances a congress devoted to discussing ways of preserving crucial items of European culture in the event of a nuclear war. The congress takes place in a country that sounds like Jugoslavia and which is in a state of internal unrest; there is rioting, suggestions of a military coup. And in the middle of all this a group of the congress members including Nicholas is seized and held hostage by terrorists—conventional terrorist figures, deranged and unstable young of ill-defined political persuasions. Mary Lamb, awaiting her husband's release, takes up with a slightly shadowy figure, Hugo Cross, ex-British Council (he turns out to be some kind of spy), and, quite uncharacteristically, holes up with him for several days and vaguely suggests that she might stay with him even if Nicholas gets out. But Nicholas is released, the eruption of violence into hitherto tranquil lives ends, the Lambs return to England. And it is all so persuasively related that any objections to areas of improbability—the inherent dottiness of the congress, Mary's extraordinary behaviour—are silenced, at least for the duration of the novel. The orchestration of characters and story is masterly: the Lambs, who are subtly typical without lurching into cliché, the high-minded Swedish convenor of the congress, the louche sculptress Rosa, the woman novelist whose life is so much more timorous than her fictions, the elderly unflappable woman academic.

Mary herself has a curious sense of *déja vu* about the country, upon arrival: she has dreamed about it, she realises. And this prescience or hallucination is discreetly offered as the key to Mary's strange response to her husband's possible death, which is a mixture of what you might expect and an almost dream-like irresponsibility: "Nice Mary, good child, loving wife and mother . . . had been shouldered aside by some woman not at all nice, the woman who had awaited her in this country of her dreams." Excessive circumstances, it is suggested, can unleash "the serpents in oneself." The story, for all its surface dash and verve, is setting out also to be a parable about violence and loss of personal innocence. Nevertheless, I had my doubts about Mary, I'm afraid, and was much happier with the scenes in which the hostages and terrorists sit it out in the besieged tea-room: a convincing sequence in which fear and prosaic irritability are nicely combined, in which strengths and weaknesses are unnervingly revealed. Along with that deft narrative ease goes much nicety of observation and agreeably understated authorial presence (something of the benign sharp persona of the heroine, before her fall): Dame Gwendoline, for whom "private apprehension of mortality somehow took the sting from cosmic catastrophe", the sense of lurking darkness beyond "clean white curtains in a breeze, flowers, bills, library tickets . . .", the perception that "For years we are as others tell us we are. . . . Reflections in mirrors, shop windows, letters, confessions of strangers, book reviews." In the last analysis, here is a novel that is an extraordinarily good read, in which the reader's churlish objections are met half way by the competence of the pre-

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tence: and what more can you ask for, as a demonstration of fictional skill?

THE IMPACT of *A Pale View of Hills*,[4] by an author who was born in Japan but has lived in this country since the age of six, is out of all proportion to both its length and its slight plot. The narrator, Etsuko, resident in England, recalls her relationship with another woman in Nagasaki many years before, and the odd and slightly sinister events surrounding it; her recollections take place during a visit from her daughter by her English husband, her elder, Japanese, daughter having recently committed suicide. The daughter leaves; the recollection ends without any actual completion of the brief tale of the mother and child with whom it is concerned. And the novel finishes on a dying fall that is both unsettling and a little baffling—which indeed has been its effect throughout. For its strength is a remarkable quality of style in which dialogue and narration are unemphasised and yet oddly powerful. It is the kind of writing in which one searches in frustration for the source of its effects; sparse, precise and plain, the language has a stealth that leaves you with images that are suggested rather than stated. Trying to pin this down, I turned back through the pages looking for the description of a certain room: it was not there, was a product of my own imagination. And this is a subtle power for a writer to have—the ability to prompt a creative response in the reader, to arouse reactions which must be quite individual, so that the book takes as many forms as it has readers. It can only be done by means of this stylistic negativism, and the danger of course is that it overreaches itself and lapses into blandness. Once or twice *A Pale View of Hills* threatens to do this, but on the whole the effect is one of extraordinary tension, of implied griefs and evils.

The setting of Etsuko's recollection of her Japanese past is not arbitrary. It is Nagasaki, and the shadow of the bomb lies over the place and the people. The sad, wild, neglected child—Mariko—of Etsuko's friend Sachiko has seen "terrible things." A new Japan is emerging from the ashes of the old, and the conflict between the two generations is neatly and economically presented in the frustrated confrontation between Etsuko's father-in-law, a retired teacher, and the young colleague who has attacked his old-fashioned teaching methods. Ogato, the father-in-law, is a beautifully rendered character, subtly bullying the young couple with whom he is staying, carrying on a battle with his son in language that is on both sides as decorous and restrained as it is filled with unuttered fury.

But the real subject of Etsuko's recollection is Sachiko, the woman who has fallen on hard times and who preys on Etsuko's good nature—borrowing money, dumping her child—while with quiet desperation she pursues the American GI who may be her passport to better things. Sachiko is an elegant opportunist, and her conversations with Etsuko are masterpieces of Ishiguro's loaded writing: dialogue of wonderful delicacy in which Sachiko bolsters up her own *amour-propre*, keeps the younger woman in her place, and conceals—almost, but not quite—her bitterness and panic. And in and out of the story flits the little girl, the ten-year-old Mariko, for whom some macabre fate is from time to time hinted and who seems in an eerie way to be a premonitory symbol for Etsuko's own unborn daughter, who will ultimately hang herself. A hanged child is referred to; in another sinister set of images we are told that Mariko has, in the past, witnessed the drowning of a baby by a mysterious woman whose return she fears; later, Sachiko, in front of her, drowns one of the kittens she has cherished. Behind the unadorned narrative, so deliberately devoid either of explanation or of descriptive indulgence, lurks a sense of menace and of sadness. As a first novel this book is remarkable; its control and economy look like the work of a much more experienced writer.

INCEST IS A CURIOUS SUBJECT, and in fiction curiously neglected. Perhaps novelists have been put off by the polarity of its associations: the grandeurs of Greek drama on one side, the mundane domestic secret of overcrowded lives on the other. One thinks of the calm unjudging statement of the woman magistrate in *Akenfield* that the first sexual experience of many rural girls was with their fathers. It is brave of Jacqueline Simms to have taken it on as the subject of a first novel, and clever to have produced in the process an interesting and idiosyncratic book which shows her already to be a writer of achievement.

Like Kazuo Ishiguro, she chooses first-person narration: it is odd how many first-time novelists seem to do this (I can think of several others)—is it determination to jump in the deep end, or ignorance of the pitfalls? Because, of all points of view, this is the most difficult to handle: restricting, and also capable of wildly misleading the reader if not expertly handled. The character that the author presents—or thinks he is presenting—may emerge for the reader as something quite different; our accounts of ourselves, after all, are subtly untruthful, and the author has got to suggest the untruth as well as to give the account—the reader must be let into a secret without being made irritatingly aware

[4] *A Pale View of Hills*. By KAZUO ISHIGURO. Faber & Faber, £6.25.

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of it. And if there is no secret, then we are suspicious: we know our own duplicities.

Michael, the narrator of *Unsolicited Gift*,[5] is a musician and scientist who at the age of twelve forms a private and consummated marriage with his nine-year-old sister Fleur. Fleur is subsequently killed in a laboratory experiment for which Michael is responsible; her memory—or presence—haunts his ensuing relationships, first with his Japanese wife Kiyoko and then with his daughter Sumi with whom, eventually, he again commits incest. Michael's chosen style of narration is dry and detached; the trouble is that one is never quite sure whether this is a reflection of his personality or a consequence of his presentation of what happened—he is very consciously telling a story. And apart from the viewpoint choice, Jacqueline Simms has also risked telescoping a wide span of time into a very brief novel; there are inevitable leaps and omissions, but also inclusions (an episode with a woman in Paris after Michael's separation from his wife and daughter, an allegorical sequence that seems a little arch in contrast with the rest) that look superfluous given the novel's necessary economy. And when other voices are briefly heard—Kiyoko's, Sumi's, Fleur's—the distinctions are not sharp enough.

All of which sounds an inordinate amount of criticism; the point is that this is in many ways such an accomplished and individual first book that it is worth the attention. It is worth trying to isolate what has gone wrong in order to see more clearly what is right: its originality, its uncomplicated style, the subtly suggested innocence of the children—Michael and Fleur. In many ways the opening sequence is the best: Fleur's proposal that they should marry in order to preserve the inheritance of the household gods and her subsequent, equally calm and equally rational suggestion that they should have a baby in order to further perpetuate the succession. There is a sense of that perplexing world with which children are confronted and whose codes they have to try, unassisted, to break; small wonder that sometimes the bewilderment is too great and the rules are misinterpreted. All this is most adroitly done: unsentimental and yet touching, funny without exploiting the seriousness of the children. Indeed, one of the author's successes has been to create moving moments—Michael's incest with his daughter, his reunion with Kiyoko at the end—that convey genuine emotion without toppling into excesses that the deliberate restraint of the overall mood of the book would not allow. Jacqueline Simms has great control. It will be interesting to see what she does next.

[5] *Unsolicited Gift*. By JACQUELINE SIMMS. Chatto & Windus, £6.95.

Education Cuts

There is a verb in Aeschylus,
one word, for "come
to an end together with
rays of the sinking sun."
The Greek has gone; the sedulous
translation stays

around, a suitcase for these days.
Into the metaphors we years ago
set for them, hardening as they sink
together, action and passion flow;
psychical sclerosis plays
a Trojan game. The conquerors' fate

was wandering. Some, at any rate,
had wit to disbelieve the vision,
but that may not have helped.
Others had the mercy or decision
to turn back at the Scaian Gate
and let the city lie for all of us.

Ruth Padel

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AMERICAN CHRONICLE

How Relevant is the New Deal?

By Esmond Wright

LET ME SAY at the outset that I am a great admirer of Franklin Roosevelt. I got my degree from him at the University of Virginia on a memorable day in June 1940—the day Italy declared war—and had the honour of meeting the President. He was a man of immense courage and a hand-clasp like a vice: when he said in the First Inaugural Address that all that America had to fear was fear itself (a phrase he drew in fact from Henry David Thoreau) he knew of what he spoke. The FDR of 1933 who had come through the ordeal of polio, whose legs were spindle-thin and who could only stand or walk when his legs were braced, was a totally different being from the lightweight and charming figure whom his contemporaries at Harvard in his student days had called "a feather-duster." Edmund Wilson called him "a Boy Scout." As late as 1928 Al Smith said that he hadn't any brains. After his illness, however, says Rex Tugwell, he was a man of "unassailable confidence." His jaw took on a grimmer line and the boyish grin came less easily. Courage, will, a voice whose vibrancy brought a magical quality to his radio broadcasts (he could never have made the same impression had television cameras been invented), 998 press conferences over twelve years, a warm grin and the gift of blarney—only FDR could have brought America united through the twin ordeals of the Depression and World War Two.

Devoid of ideals, he was devoid also of illusions. He played the great game for the fun and skill of it. It was the hope of it that had kept him alive through his ordeal; all life now was a bonus, and he could now grin with equal jest both at triumph and disaster. And he and Churchill made the Anglo-American relationship truly special; perhaps the five years of their collaboration is the only period when there has been an absolutely "special relationship", when a letter, often long and frank and personal, went from one or other of them every fourth day over five years. FDR's contribution to economic victory in the 1930s and wartime victory in the 1940s is beyond all question.

But—the New Deal is another story. There was a youngster once who told his father that the teacher wanted him to bring to school simple statements of the Relativity theory and the New Deal. "We will begin with Relativity", said his father. "It is easier." To my reckoning there are at least 300 volumes on the New Deal. Around it a vast mythology is accreting, and politicians like Roy Jenkins, hungry for phrases and claiming to be (and what is more being accepted as) historians, are beginning to suggest that what we need in Britain is "a New Deal."

> "The early part of Roosevelt's presidency should be studied by all those who seek to change the shape of British politics today [Roy Jenkins wrote in *The Sunday Times*, 31 January 1982]."

In fact, a study of the period suggests only how wide is the gulf between the facts and the mythology. There is little in the early years of the FDR Presidency that offers models to Britain, although it is instructive to see the model Mr Jenkins has—it seems—in mind.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the New Deal turns on three phenomena: on Hoover and his measures; on FDR and his policy; and on the success of the latter. Recent writing suggests that the old verdict, of a saviour appearing in 1933, will no longer serve.

First, Hoover. The engineer of prosperity has become so identified with the failure of the mechanism in 1929 that any objective judgment is now very difficult to make. The collapse of the lush and fantastic world of the 1920s was so beyond all expectation and analysis that it was inevitable to blame it on Hoover. Hoover himself blamed it first on American over-speculation, but eventually he put most of the responsibility on worsening conditions in Europe and on the easy money policy that European statesmen persuaded the American Government to adopt. John K. Galbraith sees the trouble as American rather than European, rooted in an economy with too wide a gap between rich and poor, with a banking system in which the weak units could bring down the strong, and in which too few of the experts were fully aware of what was happening. There was in fact a host of causes, domestic as well as foreign: war debts, reparations, currency manipulations, tariff barriers abroad, but

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also sick industries at home, such as coal and railways, underconsumption by urban workers and by farmers, technological unemployment caused by industrial advance itself, too much speculation in many industries, too little buying power among the public as a whole. What is certainly clear is that Hoover was not to blame, and if disaster had human agents, his predecessors in office were far more responsible than he was himself.

Indeed, perhaps "blame" is not the word, because pre-1929 America was fantastically prosperous—by every index: 100% increase in the national income in terms of material goods between 1909 and 1929, output per man-hour in manufacturing doubling in the same period; the US, with 6% of world population, had 60% of the world's telephones and 80% of its cars, consumed 75% of its rubber and 65% of its raw silk, produced 40% of its coal and iron ore, 75% of its corn, 70% of its oil, 55% of its cotton; moreover, it produced new items, and was the home of applied invention (advertising, consumer credit, radio, household appliances, cigarettes and, not least, movies). It grew, simply, too fast, and even in its depressed areas there were compensations. When Russians viewed the film of *The Grapes of Wrath*, they marvelled that the Okies had cars. Will Rogers joked that the US was the only nation that went to the poorhouse by automobile.

HERBERT HOOVER, however, had serious limitations in coping with a crisis that was, at least in part, a crisis of confidence as well as of the economic system. Of high ideals and considerable administrative capacity, his approach was that of the businessman: like many a Republican standard-bearer before and since, he had never been a politician in the conventional or partisan sense. Like Wendell Willkie in 1940 or Dwight Eisenhower in 1952, he had never run for political office before he ran for the Presidency. (At bottom he was a *laissez-faire* liberal.) His reputation rested, for Republicans, on his engineering skills; for others, on his reputation as a Wilsonian relief administrator in Europe. He had lived most of his life outside the United States—he thought pre-1914 England "the most comfortable place to live in the whole world." Arthur Schlesinger Jr. speaks of his qualities as those of a doctrinaire:

> "Doctrinaire by temperament, he tended to make every difference in degree a difference in kind, and to transform questions of tactics into questions of principle. . . . His was the tragedy of a man of high ideals whose intelligence froze into inflexibility and whose dedication was smitten by self-righteousness."

There was a failure of imagination, best indicated in his expulsion of the Bonus Army from Anacostia Flats in Washington in 1932 and his refusal to see their leaders—an expulsion carried out by four troops of cavalry and infantry with bayonets and tear gas, forces commanded by General Douglas MacArthur (and his aide, Major Dwight D. Eisenhower). This was a profound psychological, not to mention a human, failure. "Thank God", he rashly exclaimed during the 1932 campaign, "we still have a Government in Washington that knows how to deal with the mob." He defended the protective Tariff and the Gold Standard as arks of the covenant. Yet, all this said, it is striking how far—if often with great reluctance—Hoover was prepared to go in meeting a situation so much beyond his imagining, and perhaps his control. It was Hoover who committed the White House to the first serious efforts to halt the Depression. His Federal Farm Board attempted to support agricultural prices—but its resources proved quite inadequate. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was set up to give Government assistance to business; and in the end he approved Federal loans from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to the States. A Federal Home Loan Bank Act was passed on Hoover's urging to ease the mortgage-pressure on home-owners. He advocated the establishment of a Public Works Administration—but Congress refused to support him. Not merely did these measures presage the outline of the New Deal, there was during 1932 a clearer policy for coping with the crisis coming from Hoover than from Roosevelt. Compare the resounding generalities of Roosevelt—"The country needs, and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold persistent experimentation"—and the specific recommendations to Congress, eighteen of them, that Hoover was able to point to in a campaign speech at Detroit in October 1932.

> "Practically the only evidence of the Democratic candidate upon this programme is the sneer that it has been designed to help banks and corporations, that it has not helped the common man. He knows full well that the only purpose of helping an insurance company is to protect the policy-holder."

Indeed, in the nine months that then stretched between nomination in June and election in the following March, it was far from clear what Roosevelt intended. He had got the nomination only on the fourth ballot—and Al Smith's forces never made it unanimous. Having secured it, he was fully aware that the mood of 1932, with some fourteen million unemployed (some 25% of the work force), made the defeat of Hoover all but certain: like Lincoln in 1860, having been nominated, he could now hardly lose. And so while the talk was robust, its content was nebulous, even reactionary. He outdid Hoover in demands for

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economy cuts. He wanted a 25% cut in the budget. To win the support of the Isolationists he disowned one of the few altruistic decisions of his career—his support in 1920 for Wilson and the League of Nations. In his speeches there is hardly any reference to inflation, hardly any suggestion of "pump-priming." He held firm to the politician's golden rule, which he later expressed himself:

> "You know the first thing a President has to do in order to put through good legislation? He has to get elected."

Yet once elected, in the four-month interregnum between November 1932 and March 1933, he refused all Hoover's requests for collaboration in dealing with the crisis. He went far to wreck the London Economic Conference. His target remained purely political; to square his critics and to settle accounts with his backers, he picked a Cabinet dominated by Conservatives and Southern reactionaries.

Hoover did not, and perhaps could not, avert a catastrophe that he did not create. Nevertheless, he had already undermined Calvin Coolidge's faith that the business of America was business. The Government had, however reluctantly, intervened. *Laissez-faire* had been sabotaged by its own engineer. But the changes were niggling and unconvincing, the engineer ashamed and without hope. He was, he said, at the end of his tether. He lacked (and Roosevelt had in abundance) political flair and political confidence. Roosevelt certainly stood for a more positive government than Hoover's, but he did not reveal how he would use his positive powers. Hoover's distaste for his successor can be amply understood.

SECOND, Roosevelt and his policy. Until March 1933, he did not know what it was himself. Even the phrase "the New Deal" was derivative and, significantly, a merger of Theodore Roosevelt's "Square Deal" and Wilson's "New Freedom." The phrase itself was coined just before the acceptance speech at Chicago. It was set down by Samuel Rosenman without a full understanding of how it would stick (like Eisenhower's pledge that he would, if elected, go to Korea and end the war). "If you were to be nominated tomorrow and had to start a campaign trip within ten days we'd be in an awful fix", he said. Rosenman had persuaded him to call in professors. If businessmen were failing, could dons and intellectual brokers be any worse? And so they came: Raymond Moley, Rex Tugwell, Adolf Berle the first of them, with Sammy "the Rose" and Henry "the Morgue" (Henry Morgenthau), and with Ernest Lindley, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, helping as speech-writer. Sherwood and MacLeish, Corcoran and Frankfurter, and social workers such as Frances Perkins and Harry Hopkins were to follow.

Yet the gathering and shaping of ideas were frighteningly casual.

> "We could throw out pieces of theory [Tugwell wrote later]. We could suggest relations; and perhaps the inventiveness of the suggestion would attract his notice. But the tapestry of the policy he was weaving was guided by an artist's conception which was not made known to us."

When Tugwell devised his programme for agriculture—essentially that of restricting production to send up prices, a device of enforced restriction—he had difficulty in explaining it on the telephone to FDR. FDR brought in Rosenman who could not understand it either. "Well, Professor", said Roosevelt finally, "put it in a telegram—two or three hundred words—and we'll work it into the speech. I'll take your word for it that it's the latest and most efficient model." Some of these "Brain Trusters"—Tugwell and Moley, advocates of state planning and economic nationalism—did not last long. Some of the most important measures—the Commodity Credit Corporation and the Export-Import Bank—owed everything to Jesse Jones, the rich Texan who came in to run the Hoover-era R.F.C. It was all—in Professor Schlesinger's phrase—"experiment corrected by compassion."

By March 1933, with the doors of every bank in the country closed, the President was committed to every policy under the sun. Even his final election speech in reply to Hoover's in November had been a merger of three men's drafts, with an introduction of his own. When asked to choose between ideas propounded from opposed camps like Free Trade and Protection, his solution, offered with gusto and his own inimitable charm, was: "Fine! Fine! Weave the two together!"

For the essence of Roosevelt's political flair lay in his ability as a fixer—of ideas as of men. He was not an original thinker. When he met John Maynard Keynes, in so many ways the *fons et origo* of the ideas he was applying, he did not take to him, and was out of his depth. Intellectually, he was far less prepared for his job than either Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson. And consistency for him was unimportant. He was fully aware where his skill—and his strength—lay. For in surrounding himself with men of strong personality who were endlessly clashing with each other, FDR could himself reign as King, his bonhomie the balance-wheel of the Administration, his humour itself a weapon. He sought deliberately, it seems, to create areas of conflict in order to act as prince rather than prophet—arbiter between Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes, Donald Nelson and Averell Harriman, Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles. Justice Holmes recognised the situation a

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few months after Roosevelt entered the White House: "a second-rate intellect but a first-rate temperament." It was temperament and faith in action—almost any action—by the Government that was the essence of the first New Deal.

OF ACTION there was plenty in the first Hundred Days, although the pattern set was highly inconsistent. A Bank Holiday was proclaimed, and the banks were put under licence: in the end, 2,000 were compelled to close for ever; those that survived had the nation's confidence. The Glass-Steagall Act gave a Federal guarantee to all bank deposits in the Federal Reserve System, and the governors of the Federal Reserve Board were given stronger powers of control of the nation's credit; commercial and investment banking were separated. Confidence in the national credit system was restored. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation went further than Hoover's measure in helping mortgagors; the Farm Credit Administration did the same for farmers. And the emphasis on economy was maintained: government expenditure was cut; even the Veterans Bureau was docked of some £300 million. These measures, like the abandonment of Prohibition, were in substance conservative.

The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) was perhaps the outstanding example of Roosevelt as an "ideological fixer." It took over and made binding the business methods suggested by the United States Chamber of Commerce and already applied in the 1920s: the establishment of standards, the fixing of fair trade practices, and in some cases the actual fixing of prices. It satisfied, in other words, a business demand for Government approval of "fair competition." But it tied this up with a similar demand on the part of the American Federation of Labour and the American labour movement for protection for the worker in the form of minimum wages and restrictions on hours of work. If, on the one hand, industry was to be stimulated, labour was, on the other, to be protected—and to be sure of its power to purchase the products of industry. Codes of fair practices were to be drawn up for each industry. And the right of collective bargaining was guaranteed—it was to be done by representatives freely chosen by the employees. And even this was a skilful piece of evasion, for it left the way open as much to the company union as the trade union. The National Recovery Administration (NRA), with the "Blue Eagle" as its symbol and General Hugh Johnson as its vigorous and often profane administrator, seemed a politician's masterpiece.

Nor can the Agricultural Adjustment Act be seen as anything but an artificial device to maintain prices by scarcity. In return for a restriction of output, farmers were offered benefit payments on

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cotton, wheat, corn, pigs, tobacco, and rice. To meet the cost of this, a processing tax was levied on these staples. Since crops were already in the ground, the Government went further and ordered the deliberate ploughing under of a portion of the cotton crop and the slaughter of more than six million pigs. And a curious new concept was introduced, the idea of "parity": the price received by the farmer was to be equal to the purchasing power of agricultural commodities in the years 1909–14. The Government now, in fact, supported a planned agriculture, and in subsidising non-production seemed to support a planned capitalism in reverse.

> "Hoover proposed to plough up every fourth row of cotton [orated Huey P. Long, the "Kingfish", in Louisiana]. Roosevelt went him one better and ploughed up every third row."

If much in this programme can be seen as a series of devices for "maintaining the capitalist system", if system it was, there were many features of the first New Deal that brought alarm, even panic, to capitalists. The Government went off the gold standard. It introduced the Securities Exchange Commission to supervise the financial market. The Tennessee Valley Authority was set up—the most controversial of all Roosevelt's early measures, although now seen in retrospect as one of the most valuable. And there was a vast relief programme—in the Public Works Administration run by atrabilious and testy Harold Ickes, the Civil Works Administration of Harry Hopkins, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. These won support from labour and the unemployed: but they were anathema to business.

HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS this "first" New Deal? In law, most unsuccessful. Both the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act were declared invalid by the Supreme Court. Nor, as a principle of Government policy, was planning successful. Raymond Moley said:

> "We agreed that the heart of our difficulty was the anarchy of concentrated economic power which, like a cannon loose on a frigate's deck, tore from one side to another, crushing those in its path. But we felt that the remedy for this was not to substitute muskets for cannon or to throw the cannon overboard. We believed that any attempt to atomise big business must destroy America's greatest contribution to a higher standard of living for the body of the citizenry—the development of mass production. We agreed that equality of opportunity must be preserved. But we recognised that competition as such was not inherently virtuous. . . . So we turned from the nostalgic philosophy of the 'trust busters'. . . ."

What Moley saw as government assistance for "a balanced and dynamic economic system" did not appear so to Hoover. The concept of the NRA was, he said, a regimented "economy of scarcity . . . an idea that increased costs, restricted production and hampered enterprise will enrich a Nation." It encouraged monopoly and hit small businesses. In March 1934, FDR appointed a board headed by Clarence Darrow, the Chicago criminal lawyer and liberal, to determine the validity of the charges. He found them substantially proved and found that the codes had fostered monopolistic practices. By 1935, the Administration was coming to agree that the NRA was cumbersome and complicated. It may well be that it was relieved when the Supreme Court pronounced it unconstitutional.

If the measures to help the farmer did not meet the same degree of criticism—for it could be argued that the farmer's effort to bring his production into line with demand was no more than what industry did regularly, smoothly, and successfully—and if farmers became New Deal men, yet a philosophy of negation was hard to justify except as pure expediency. The two dramatic illustrations of production control—the slaughter of six million pigs and the destruction of cotton crops ready for picking—confirmed the image abroad of the United States as ruthless and selfish. "The more sincerely one believes that such legislation was an emergency necessity the more terrible is the indictment of the civilisation which brought it about", thundered Norman Thomas. And surpluses in any event recurred. The farmer's condition improved—but at fantastic cost.

Politically, this brought in dividends. If the Administration was losing the support of business by 1934, it was gaining the support of the farmer, the worker, and the Negro. It is rare for the party in power in the United States to increase its congressional representation in a non-presidential election year. But in 1934 the Democrats won 332 seats in the House of Representatives against 313 in 1932, and their representation in the Senate rose from 50 to 69. The Democratic Party became more clearly the party of the city and farm worker, of Western agrarians and of the Negro—and it was clear that for such groups the President (and not least his wife) had obvious sympathy.

But on practical success the verdict has to be less sanguine. In the early part of 1933 unemployment dropped sharply, but in January 1934 it rose again to 12,000,000, and in November, when the elections were held, it was 11,000,000. Industrial production had fallen: it was only one-third of the way towards the 1929 figures. Business morale was low. And agricultural prices were far below the pre-

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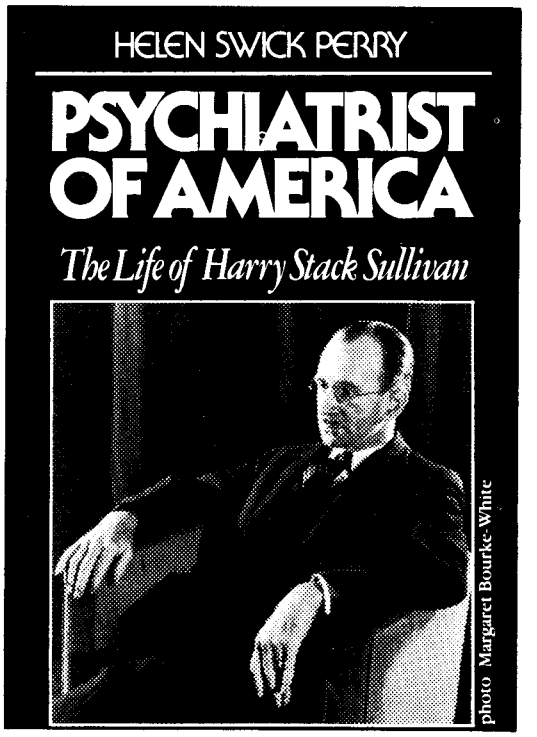
1929 figures. The President, a master of political moods, skilful at communicating his own confidence by fire-side chats over the radio and by regular press conferences—on both instruments he could give virtuoso performances—was not master of the economic situation.

It was his mastery of the political mood that led to the "second" New Deal, where more genuine reforms were enacted. To this Roosevelt was driven not only by economic failure but by lessons he could read without benefit of economic punditry.

IN LOUISIANA emerged the "Share-the-Wealth" movement of the "Kingfish", Huey Long, with his demand that the Government should guarantee an income of $5,000 a year to every family in the country—a country where, he believed, "Every man is a king, every woman a queen, but no one wears a crown." It is easy now to sneer at Long as a Messiah of the red-necks, with manners that were crude and an ambition that was rampant. When he came to lunch at Hyde Park, the President's mother (a dowager empress who did not need a crown) eyed him beadily, and asked her son in a penetrating whisper, "Who is that horrible man?" But Long's assassination—perhaps at the hands of his own bodyguard—removed one whom some men could see as a threat, and others could see as a rival. Nor was Louisiana *sui generis*. Father Coughlin, the radio-priest of the Shrine of the Little Flower in Detroit, was calling for nationalisation of the banks and of the national resources, and for more inflation. Upton Sinclair—whose novel *The Jungle* (1906) had done so much to stir Uncle Teddy to awareness of conditions in the meat-packing industry in Chicago—was now calling for a programme of *End Poverty in California* (EPIC) on which he almost won the Governorship of the State. And in the same happy state, where exotic plans flowered as thick as its own bougainvillaea, Dr Francis Townshend saw a simple solution for economic ills: Give everyone who reached 60 and had a good character a government pension of $200 a month, on condition that they spend it before the next pay-day. Not surprisingly Dr Townshend had many followers: there were in the end 3,000 Townshend Clubs across the country. And from John L. Lewis and the newly formed CIO came a more serious demand for genuine support for the trade-union movement.

THE EXTENT of the mid-term electoral victory of 1934, and now this popular movement, undoubtedly impressed the President, and there was a sharp shift in his policy.

"A decent living throughout life is an ambition to



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be preferred to the appetite for great wealth and great power."

Raymond Moley saw it all as a shift from a theory of Concentration and Control to one of Atomisation, and left the government to those adherents of Brandeis, like Corcoran, who preached the "Curse of Bigness." But the legislative measures of the Second New Deal had been long in the Congressional melting-pot, and Congress after 1934 had a will of its own. The scale of unemployment suggested that the theory of a directed rather than a planned economy, of a happy consensus of Government, industry, and labour was illusory. Berle, Morley, and Tugwell were out; Hopkins was in. And so were Felix Frankfurter and the men brought up on Maynard Keynes. The economy that was revived was mixed and capitalist, a compensated, not a directed economy. And so there came demands now for more daunting legislation. First, a Works Progress Administration with a five-billion-dollar budget—the money to come from borrowing, not taxes; despite the many splendid projects built under its auspices (and the aid it provided for artists and writers), it was seen as a form of political patronage. Hopkins, the administrator, was charged with saying "We shall spend and spend and elect and elect"; true or otherwise, the WPA led businessmen now to see FDR as Enemy No. 1. It was followed by the Social Security Act providing protection against old age and unemployment (on lines long familiar in Britain and the rest of Western Europe); by steeper inheritance taxes; and not least by the Wagner Act giving protection to the unions and their bargaining power—a measure that the President had earlier shelved and which he approved only in the most restrained terms. Much of this legislation had less obviously the hallmarks of FDR personally. He had in no way encouraged the Wagner Act. But it brought him permanently a dividend he could appreciate: the support of labour. His re-election in 1936 was the greatest electoral triumph in American history. He won 46 of the then 48 states, all but Maine and Vermont ("As Maine goes, so goes Vermont"). On a bridge leading from New Hampshire to Maine appeared the placard: "You are now leaving the United States." As he put it, everyone was against him—except the electorate.

And yet, in 1937, the economy was in decline once more. Industrial production slumped right through the year; and it slumped precisely as the Government stopped spending. The boom of 1933 and the boom of 1935–36 were caused, it seems, by Government spending and by that alone, and not by theories of direction, control, or any mixture of the two. By 1937 there were bitter disputes in the steel and automobile industries. Unemployment, which had fallen below 5,000,000 in August 1937, rose to 9,600,000 or 17% of the workforce in May 1938. The President lost political support even in his own party with his attack on the Supreme Court—perhaps the major political error of his career. And by 1937 he was losing his grip on Congress: he failed to persuade it to approve his plan for seven regional conservation authorities, to pass agricultural legislation, to approve his plan for minimum wages and maximum hours, or to carry his plan for administrative reorganisation. He failed particularly in 1938 when in the mid-term elections he sought to "purge" the members of Congress by supporting the re-election of some and opposing others. His numbers in the House—though still a majority—fell to 262. It was in fact the end of the New Deal. After 1938 the important questions became questions of foreign policy. On this subject FDR had said hardly anything until 1937. Yet it was, paradoxically, his role here that was to give him a second chance to play the part of a liberal crusader; and after 1938 it was the War effort, or preparation for it, that solved the unemployment problem.

ROOSEVELT WAS NOT the author of the New Deal. It came partly from his lieutenants; it came partly out of the past; it came partly from Hoover. Many of the agricultural reforms had been discussed by the Coolidge administration; the content of the NIRA came largely from the Chambers of Commerce and the trade association movement of the 1920s; the TVA was Senator George Norris's handiwork, the Wagner Act Senator Robert Wagner's. The second New Deal went through Congress with vast majorities and clearly represented a national demand. By 1937 the President had disrupted his party and ceased to control Congress.

Nor did the New Deal end the Depression or large-scale unemployment. The business of America was now government as well as business, and at a high price. During the 1930s, some 46 million people (33% of the population) got public aid or social insurance at one time or another. These programmes, which hardly existed in 1929, were costing 5 billion dollars in 1939 (which formed, in that year, 7% of GNP). In other words, FDR brought 'the Welfare State" to America. It left, however, some impressive achievements behind, however motivated: TVA, the Wagner Act, social security, insured bank savings, the right to join unions. In restoring to many workers their self-respect, the Roosevelt relief programme left his name a treasured memory in many of the areas blighted by the Depression from New York to Oklahoma.

And the man in the White House? One verdict on him is that of James MacGregor Burns, who sees him as a superb leader without settled convictions, a manipulator perfectly adapted to the political climate, a tactician sanctified by his skill at

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the profession of politics. The only appropriate verdict, he thinks, is Machiavelli's.

> "A prince must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognise traps and a lion to frighten wolves. Those that wish to be only lions do not understand this. Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist. If men were all good, the precept would not be a good one; but as they are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them."

Arthur Schlesinger has a deeper insight into the personality and the inner loneliness of the man.

> "The public face, all grin and gusto, had been carefully cultivated at Groton and Harvard; illness had made it second nature. But behind the cordiality and exuberance there remained an impassable reserve which many reconnoitered but none could penetrate. The relentless buoyancy was less an impulse of the soul than a mark of cheer to the world, in part spontaneous enough, but more a defense against pity without and discouragement within. . . . Underneath there remained the other man—tougher than the public man, harder, more ambitious, more calculating, more petty, more puckish, more selfish, more malicious, more profound, more complex, more interesting. . . . Detachment endowed him with a capacity for craftiness in politics and for calculation, sometimes even for cruelty, in human relations. Those who loved him best he teased most mercilessly. Nearly everybody was expendable."

HISTORICAL COMPARISONS are dangerous things. They are best seen as intellectual exercises, for sixth-formers or undergraduate essayists. All that we know of the future is that it will be totally unlike the past. Certainly there is little in the American experience in the 1930s that would serve as a guide for contemporary Britain. The US was shaken by the experiences of the '30s largely because of the phenomenal affluence of the '20s, a decade marked by fantastic growth—of motor car production, of radio and films.

More than this, the New Deals were pieces of experiment, of pragmatism run riot. During the "100 Days", Congress approved packages of empty paper, leaving the Great Improviser to fill in the details in a way no British Parliament would ever approve. And—unlike contemporary Britain—the major areas of American success have been areas of private enterprise: public and state-primed activities, like the CCC, TVA or NRA, were unusual because of their very novelty. Private enterprise could slump; but it could—over there—rise again. By sad contrast the British dilemma is the grip of public, unwieldy corporations, some of them with monopoly powers, cushioned by index-linked pensions, menaced by trade-union pressures, that are responsive all too slowly, if at all, to the competition of the market place. As Harold Macmillan has pointed out, in Britain in 1960 some 40% of the GNP was spent by central and local government on the public services. Sixteen years later this had risen to 60%, leaving only 40% for the production of the wealth on which everything else depends. Moreover, of our 28-million working population, almost half are non-productive in that they serve in the professions or as administrators, or in the service trades. More and more of us depend on fewer and fewer real "workers." The present Government (and not least the Chancellor in his March budget) is seeking to stimulate electronic and microchip industries, but they are still pathetically small in comparison to the enterprises that mark Silicon Valley or the Carolina Triangle, or dot Route 29 round Boston. We will have to devise our own answers to our own very different problems. For us the State-financed agencies are enemies, not liberators.

Neither Keynes nor Roosevelt will, I am afraid, serve as models for Britain in 1984.

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The Ambivalence of Camp David Rhetoric

The Arab Idea of "Peace with Israel"

By RONALD L. NETTLER

ISRAEL'S withdrawal from the Sinai, in exchange for Egyptian acceptance of Israel and the gradual "normalisation" of relations between the two countries, has put into practice a long-standing formula for resolving the Arab-Israel dispute: "Territory for Peace." This formula, which has been part of most thinking on the Middle East since 1967, is enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 242, which calls for a "package" settlement consisting of mutual recognition of all states in the area, secure boundaries, and Israeli withdrawal from (some but not necessarily all) territory captured in the Six-Day War. Egypt has as yet been the only Arab state to enter into direct negotiations with Israel toward this kind of arrangement. Others in recent years, however, have also expressed willingness, in principle, to accept such a settlement, but without any of the positive features of peace—in particular, diplomatic recognition of Israel—which so far remain unique to Egypt's endeavour.

Before the negotiations between Israel and Egypt, the formula of "Territory for Peace" was interpreted by those Arabs who accepted it in principle as a means toward the piecemeal dismantling of Zionism and the ultimate return to pre-1948 "normalcy." The Arabs, whose Islamic and pan-Arab vision rendered them incapable of accepting Jewish sovereignty in their midst, could only understand such a formula of mutual concessions as a convenient method for returning the Jews to their appropriate position of powerlessness under Arab Muslim rule. The emphasis on territory was important for the Arabs as a way of deflating Zionism's pretensions; but for most Arabs the territorial issue never signified the entrance to a final peaceful settlement (as it did for most Israelis and most Westerners).

Egypt's effort since November 1977 has been unique not because it reflects a new approach to an overall Middle Eastern settlement but rather because it transforms the received principle of "Territory for Peace" into a political reality. Anwar Sadat realised that to effect this transformation they would have to pay the ultimate price: direct contact with Israel and, should negotiations succeed, diplomatic exchanges and other instruments of "normalisation." Egypt's courage lay in its stated readiness to take this last step, in contrast to the general Arab refusal to do so.

With its talk of real peace, normal relations, and the acceptance of Israel as a neighbour, Egypt instilled life into the principle of a settlement based on territorial compromise. Egypt apparently proved its intentions by entering into direct negotiations with the Israelis. With this there came a difference in spirit, which was the source of Egypt's appeal to Israel and to the West. In the Egyptian formula peace would be more than a simple territorial rearrangement, and more even than a formal treaty to mark the occasion of such a rearrangement. Rather, peace would possess features of friendly relations and mutual respect based on a *change of heart* in both camps. Mutual hatred and enmity would melt away, to be replaced by friendliness, compassion, and a commitment to negotiation. "*No more war*", Sadat proclaimed, and his voice was echoed in Jerusalem and Washington.

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EVEN THIS ASPECT of the Egyptian "initiative", however, had an ideological precedent in the history of Arab attitudes toward Israel. For in spite of the central Arab preoccupation with Zionism as a demonic force, there has long been a minor trend in Arab thought advocating peaceful settlement with the demon. This may never have reached the scope achieved by Egypt in the post-1977 peace, but it was the logical precursor of certain developments in Egyptian political thinking in the early '70s, which in turn constituted the immediate ideological background to the later Egyptian policy. There is here, then, a long history of a "moderate" approach toward Israel.

THE HISTORY of this approach had its origins with the Jordanian King Abdullah, grandfather of the present King Hussein. (For his moderate views, Abdullah was assassinated by representatives of the more extreme Palestinian Arabs.) Hussein has described the compromise his grandfather was willing to accept in these words:

> ". . . In the aftermath of the 1936 rebellion by the Arabs of Palestine, fearing, and rightly so, as King Abdullah explained in his messages to the British government, that the uncontrolled and massive influx of Jewish immigration into Palestine would inevitably result in the destruction and dispersal of the Palestine people, the British government sent the Peel Commission to investigate the situation on the spot. In 1937 the Commission recommended the partitioning of Palestine, with the major areas of green Palestine remaining in the hands of its legitimate Palestine owners. The Palestinian Arab areas were to have united with Transjordan under the stewardship and reign of King Abdullah. The proposed state, which would have been designated the United Arab Kingdom, would have included such famed and ancient cities and towns as Jerusalem—the Old and most of the New—since it was largely Arab; Jaffa, Lydda (Lod), Safed, Ramleh, Nazareth, Acre, Beersheba, Asqalan (Ashkelon), Gaza, right up to the Egyptian frontier, not to mention the whole of the West Bank.
>
> 'The Jewish state would have been confined to a narrow coastal strip, extending from Tel-Aviv to Haifa. The so-called moderate leadership among the Palestinian Arabs accepted the plan and even initiated talks with King Abdullah for its implementation. The extremist elements within the Palestinian leadership rejected it outright, and since they possessed the gun, their counsel prevailed. . . ."[1]

In Hussein's estimation, Abdullah had exhibited unusual perspicacity in ascertaining the true balance of power between Zionism and the Arabs, and in proposing immediate acceptance of the Zionist evil on terms favourable to the Arabs. Such a settlement with Zionism would have weakened Israel's chances for successful future development, while at the same time enhancing the Arab movement toward trength and independence. By eschewing the exclusive reliance on military means for removing the alien intrusion, this strategy would ultimately have resulted in attainment of the Arab goal, whereas the continued fanatical striving for a decisive and unattainable military solution would only strengthen the Zionist presence.

Until June 1967, the line of thinking represented by Abdullah, unpopular from the start, remained submerged in a rising wave of anti-Israel vehemence culminating in the Six-Day War. The terrible results of this war provoked in the Arab world a new and deep tendency toward self-examination and self-criticism. It was only natural that in this context Abdullah's brand of realism should have found an echo in vigorous proposals for more effective Arab policies. At its best tough and unyielding, this post-War mood of introspection served the positive purpose of encouraging new attitudes to the old Arab-Israeli problems. In the words of Cecil Hourani, perhaps the most lucid of the Arab critics in this period, ". . . every human situation—except annihilation—contains within it the seeds of its final reversal."[2]

FOR CECIL HOURANI, a prominent Arab nationalist and former adviser to President Bourguiba of Tunisia, the self-defeating military approach to Israel was a symptom of a general Arab inability to conduct political affairs maturely and wisely: "the most dramatic, but not the only, example of our weakness, and of our failure to recognise both our weakness and our strength. . . ." The Arab goal, Hourani argued, should long have been not the annihilation but the *containment* of Israel, as a means of weakening it and stripping it of its Zionist identity:

> ". . . after 1948 Zionism was confined to a tiny territory which was strategically weak and scarcely viable economically. Had we consolidated the independence we had gained, we could have contained Israel, and with it world

[1] King Abdullah of Jordan, *My Memoirs Completed: al-Takmilah*, with foreword by King Hussein, pp.xiv–xvi.

[2] Cecil Hourani expresses his views here in his famous article "The Moment of Truth." The article appeared in Arabic in *al-Nahar* (Beirut) and in English in ENCOUNTER (November 1967). The version quoted here is the ENCOUNTER article, also reprinted in Walter Laqueur's *The Israel-Arab Reader* (Bantam, N.Y., 1969), pp. 247–8.

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> Zionism, for fifty years, after which Israel itself would have ceased to be a threat to us, and become just another Levantine state, part Jewish, part Arab, but overwhelmingly Oriental.
>
> Instead of which, twenty years later, we have not only lost what remained of Arab Palestine: we have also helped Zionism to leap forward yet another stage in its dynamic progress toward full Jewish nationalism. . . ."

Still, Israel's victory in 1967 was not, in Hourani's view, a decisive and permanent conquest. It was rather a military occupation of Arab lands which paradoxically had achieved no political gains for Israel: "It has on the contrary brought against her a coalition of international pressures which never existed before, and liquidated the fruit of twenty years' work to win friends in Africa and Asia." Therefore, said Hourani, although recent Arab weaknesses precluded the possibility of defeating Israel *militarily*, there was still an opportunity to effect the same aim *politically*, if in a gradual manner:

> "The conclusions to be drawn are two: in the first place, the resort to military force as a basic element in Arab policy toward Israel is an error. In the second place, our best chance of containing Israel lies in international pressures either within or outside the United Nations."

This aim would best be realised through skilful Arab negotiation and use of Arab influence—not through direct contacts with Israel, as the Zionists demanded, but rather by working indirectly through international bodies like the United Nations. The results, Hourani predicted, would be total Israeli withdrawal from the territories taken in June 1967 and a massive repatriation of Arab refugees in Israel. This situation would provide the basis for a real settlement which would further reduce Israel in size, weaken it demographically, and instil in it "Oriental" characteristics.

The final goal would be an "open, liberal, and tolerant Arab society" in which Jews would have their place, as opposed to the "closed, exclusive, fanatic Israel" which had been responsible for "the introduction of racial nationalism into the Near East." Hourani concluded: "Our greatest victory will be the day when the Jews in Palestine will prefer to live in an Arab society rather than in an Israeli one. It is up to us to make that possible."

HOURANI'S THESIS hung on a framework of three related objectives which are remarkably similar to the guidelines of a certain strain of contemporary Egyptian thinking about Israel: (*1*) Containment of Israel, territorially and demographically, as a basis for (*2*) orientalising and "de-Zionising" Israel, as preparation for (*3*) the final transformation of Israel from a sovereign Jewish state into a tolerant Palestinian Arab society which would be even more attractive to Jews than the "closed, fanatic" Zionist society of today. All this was to be achieved through a positive and reasonable Arab approach to the world, presented as a quest for peace rather than as a means of destroying Israel and retrieving usurped lands.

Although Cecil Hourani did not approve of direct negotiations with Israel and certainly did not advocate normal peaceful relations on the basis of mutual recognition, what was striking about his article was its conciliatory tone. He even went so far as to say that a "formal peace" could be struck with Israel, provided it were a step in the right direction, i.e., merely a matter of "expediency."

LET US LOOK a little more closely at Hourani's "solution" to the modern conflict between Arabs and Jews. In essence, it relies on a conception of past relations between Arabs and Jews which is a staple of Arab ideology. According to this conception, Jews once lived as equals in a pluralistic and tolerant Arab society. Historically (in this view), Arab civilisation benevolently accepted and included the Jews as part of its large and variegated social pattern—a pattern comprising different racial and religious strands, fixed in a general background of Arab ethos and culture. (One implication here is that traditional Arab civilisation once fulfilled the highest ideals of modern liberal notions of human rights and democratic procedure.)

From this perspective, Zionism as a doctrine represented a claim to an unnecessary new status for the Jews, as a separate nation entitled to rule themselves and others, while Zionism in practice was the nightmarish realisation of this fallacy, resulting in the disruption of the previously harmonious Arab society and the imposition on it of a philosophy hitherto unknown in the Arab world: European racial nationalism. How to regain the lost paradise?—with the liquidation of that which violated its peace.

In kernel, such has long been the thinking of Arab nationalist intellectuals in their efforts to formulate an explanation for their contemporary plight as a once-proud civilisation laid low by Western dominance and condescension, of which Zionism is the most virulent form. For nationalists like Cecil Hourani, the myth of the golden age is formulated with an Arab rather than an Islamic emphasis. But in fact the civilisation of which these Arab nationalists dream was an Islamic one, motivated and organised by the vision of total Muslim superiority over others. Although that vision did provide a "protected" status for non-Muslims, it was a status of inferiority. In that con-

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text, to be sure, relations were harmonious—so long as each party remained in its assigned position in the social hierarchy. Excluded from the realm of possibility was the right of any of the "protected" peoples to independence, self-rule, or equality with Muslims.

It is here that we can locate the logic behind the attack on modern Jewish sovereignty in the midst of Arabdom. Zionism, in this view, is an attempt to "turn the tables"; to dislodge the Jews from their proper place as a "protected" religious minority under Islam and to install them in a sovereign role.

BUT WHY SHOULD Arab nationalists like Hourani blur the true nature of earlier communal relations in the Arab-Islamic world? Ignorance of the historical situation cannot be the reason; deliberate falsification cannot be the purpose. Rather, it would seem that the task of ideology-making requires a vision of past perfection in order both to justify the rejection of Zionism and, perhaps, to lay a basis for reconstructing the old relationship of superiors to inferiors. In a wider perspective, Arab nationalists are also addressing the issue of Arab power and of the Arab position in the modern world—quite the national obsession of Arab and Muslim thinkers. In this context, Zionism represents an aspect of the larger Western subjugation which in its brutality disrupted the harmony of Arab life. The myth of past perfection thus provides a rationale for the dual struggle against Zionism in Palestine and Western imperialism in the larger Arab arena.

To this day, virtually all Arab politicians and ideologists refuse to accord legitimacy to Jewish statehood and sovereignty. But some, in recent years, have accepted the idea of a negotiated territorial settlement (on Arab terms) as a means of achieving peace. This latter political tendency has created a general Arab approach which, though not reflecting the subtlety found in Cecil Hourani's thinking, or his keen pragmatism, has certainly put a different and more moderate face on the Arab side's presentation of the conflict.

In Egypt in the early 1970s, certain influential intellectuals and politicians used this new Arab approach as a basis for developing and promulgating their more radical ideas concerning the achievement of true peace with Israel. Although one cannot "prove" a direct link between their thinking and the subsequent turning of official Egyptian policy toward peace, it is clear that they provided a general political-ideological background. And there is one explicit link between the new thinking and the new politics, in the person of Butros Ghali.

Ghali—Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and a close adviser to Sadat—has long spoken and written of a possible peaceful solution to the Arab-Israel conflict. As with Hourani, however, Ghali's conception of peace is based on a view of Zionism as an illegitimate ideology and movement, having no right to exist in the Arab Middle East, and being irrelevant to true Jewish concerns. His is thus a proposal for peace *without* Israel, as that state is now known. In place of the present Zionist state, there would be an Oriental (Jewish) entity bearing a great resemblance to the surrounding countries and thus "fitting into" the Middle East.

In a 1974 meeting with a group of American professors visiting Egypt, Ghali was asked what would happen should the Israelis not acquiesce in his proposals for their future: "Then we will have no integration of Israel into this region. Assuming that Israel takes this very stiff attitude, defending its sovereignty according to this very radical way of thinking, I think you can have no peace in this region. . . ." [3]

Ghali's approach, though not the only one of its kind in Egypt during the mid-1970s, seems to have served as a stimulus to others, both in Egypt and elsewhere, to elaborate their basic principles. An example of Ghali's enterprising intellectual role was the special section, "PALESTINE: THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND", that appeared in the October 1975 issue of the Egyptian journal *al-Siyasah al-Dawliyah* (*National Policy*). The participants in this symposium, which was edited by Ghali, were important Egyptian and non-Egyptian political intellectuals who had dared to envisage peace with Israel as a means of salvaging Palestine for the Arab nation. Though each had his own approach, certain issues were central to all—in particular, the possibility of achieving a peaceful solution based on Israel's "de-Zionisation." That issue was raised explicitly in the question, "What is the *Substitute* (*al-badīl*) for Zionism that both Israelis and Arabs might accept, and how would it be implemented?"

In his editorial preface to the symposium, Ghali had this to say about the problem of Palestine:

> "The Palestinian front is completely different from the Egyptian front in Sinai, the Syrian front in the Golan, or the Lebanese front, for various reasons: . . .
>
> (*1*) The Israeli side does not recognise the Palestinian existence, nor does it recognise the official representative of the Palestinian people, the Palestine Liberation Organisation.
>
> (*2*) Some big states . . . also do not recognise the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. . . .
>
> (*3*) The PLO . . . has never advanced to world opinion a convincing substitute [for its usual doctrine]. Rather [it speaks] only about eliminating Israel or changing it into a secular democratic [Palestinian] state—a slogan which has not succeeded in capturing the enthusiasm of

[3] *Middle East Review* (Fall, 1978), p 25.

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the Jews or even the Arabs themselves. . . .

There is no doubt that Arab diplomatic efforts will now have to turn to breaking the deadlock on the Palestinian front. This will require strong moves to encourage American and Israeli recognition of the Palestinian fact. . . .

Palestine is the heart of the Arab homeland before it is the homeland of the Palestinians. Thus all Arabs are obliged now to put forth solutions and ideas toward a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian problem; solutions and ideas which would attract peace-loving peoples and which would work toward dissolving the front of rejection and the front of fear within Israel and outside. . . ." [4]

Ghali's emphasis here provided the general framework for the symposium. All the participants saw a solution to the "problem of Palestine" as a key to the resolution of the larger Arab-Israel conflict. While Israeli withdrawals from surrounding Arab lands were also essential, such retreats were in themselves merely superficial alterations which would still not affect the basic problem: Jewish statehood in Palestine, based on Zionist ideology. This was the significance of the "Palestinian front"—the retrieval of part of central Arabdom from illegitimate alien rule and the freeing of the Arab population therein. This solution would ultimately result in Israel becoming a Palestinian Arab republic (which would include a Jewish community). Zionism as an ideology and the trappings of Jewish statehood would gradually disappear.

AS GHALI NOTED, the ultimate objective of a secular democratic Palestinian state was so far unacceptable to both Jews and Arabs—to Jews for obvious reasons and to Arabs because the "secular democratic" nature of the proposed state was beyond the Arabs' present capacity to envisage. This end, therefore, would have to be realised in stages. How the stages of dismantling Zionism and Jewish statehood should unfold provided a good deal of the content of the symposium, in the form of suggestions for "the Substitute."

Ghali's call for proposals that would dissolve the Arab rejectionist front and the front of fear in Israel adumbrated some of Sadat's later themes, particularly his emphasis on Jewish fear as an impediment to Israel's acceptance of a more reasonable way. When Sadat said that "70% of the war is psychological", he was referring in part to the obsessive Arab fear of peace with Israel and in part to Jewish fears of physical destruction. In Ghali's view, too, both sides had to learn that their fears were baseless, preparatory to achieving the ultimate objective.

For Ghali, as for all the participants, Zionism was a negative doctrine and movement, totally incompatible with the opposing Arab nationalist trend. Even Communism and Capitalism had more in common, in the form of a shared intellectual tradition:

> "The conflict between Marxism and Capitalism is a struggle between two different ideologies, but their intellectual source is one. As for the conflict between Zionism and Arab nationalism, it is a fight between two totally contradictory ideologies—racial hatred and colonial domination confronting tolerance and anti-colonialism. . . ."

This implacable opposition to Zionism reflected the general Arab and Islamic opposition to Jewish statehood. Indeed, in this view Jewish statehood is based on an historical and logical impossibility. For the idea that the Jewish people is a nation—central to Zionist doctrine—is to all Arab opinion the crucial fallacy of that doctrine, a fallacy which in its political embodiment, statehood, constitutes the nemesis of modern Arab history.

WHAT THEN OF the future? Ghali named the alternatives:

> "In short, will Israel agree to become a part of the area? Or will the nature of Zionist existence prevent Israel's assimilation into the Arab homeland? Will Israel become a new Hong Kong and the Arab nation a new China? Will Israel become an Arabised Jewish nation among the united Arab states? Or are these peaceful ideas without basis in reality, and will the conflict continue for decades, with the outbreak of the fifth Arab-Israeli war to be followed by the sixth and the seventh? . . ."

For Ghali, the only road to peace lay in Israel relinquishing its Zionist ethos and identity and "assimilating" into the "Arab homeland." This was the condition, "the Substitute." To it, more than one contributor to this symposium gave his considered assent.

Thus, Yasin al-Ayyuti (a well-known Egyptian political figure who for several years has taught at New York University and has been active at the United Nations) offered a vision of Palestine in the year 2000 that amounted to a detailed exploration of the various stages which would precede full implementation of "the Substitute."

Al-Ayyuti saw Palestine in the year 2000 as the new United Republic of Palestine, which would include the "de-Zionised" remnants of the former sovereign Zionist state. The United Nations and

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[4] *al-Siyasah al-Dawliyah* (October 1975), pp. 4–5. For an excellent early analysis of some of this material, from a more narrowly Egyptian perspective, see the article by Rivka Yadlin and Amatziah Baram, "Egypt's Changing Attitude Towards Israel", *The Jerusalem Quarterly* (No. 7, Spring 1978), pp. 68–87.

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other international organisations would aid in the process of decolonisation, which would occur in three stages. (*1*) Initial Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders and creation of a Palestinian Arab state. This period would be characterised by conflict (sometimes military) as the parties adjusted to their new situations, thus requiring United Nations or other outside intervention. (*2*) A federated Palestine. In this period, the process of Zionist collapse and Palestinian Arab development would take hold, resulting in a federal or confederal relationship between the two sides. Jewish emigration, due to loss of Jewish commitment to the increasingly "de-Zionised" country, would be matched by a concomitant Palestinian Arab immigration, buoyed by the positive ethos of nation-building. (*3*) United Palestine. Here the momentum would reach the final goal, as the entity once known as Israel would gradually slough off the attributes of statehood:

> "This is the period of Israel's reduction to a district having a protocol providing for the protection of the culture, religion, and customs of its residents, within the new United Republic of Palestine. There would be a special status in the international order for a [new] district like this one, since for several years to come the district would maintain its erstwhile external, commercial, technological, economic, and social relations. . . .
>
> In such circumstances, Israel's membership in international organisations would end. Palestinian delegations to the conferences and sessions of these organisations would be composed of Arabs and Jews. Thus Israel's status after the end of the period of peaceful dissolution would be like Quebec's status in Canada (with the difference that Quebec has a sort of motherland in France, while Israel has none), or like Scotland's position in the United Kingdom."

Another contributor to the symposium, Hasan al-Jalabi (formerly professor of international law at the University of Baghdad and in 1975 at the Lebanese University, Beirut), spoke of missed Arab opportunities in terms reminiscent of King Abdullah and Cecil Hourani:

> "I believe that the causes which led to the failure of Arab policy in treating the Palestinian problem are: a lack of ability to understand the future . . . and a lack of understanding that policy must be realistic. . . . At the time when Zionism understood this and was able to make its plans accordingly . . . the Arabs remained attached only to the ideal without giving any thought to what was possible."

For al-Jalabi, continuous Arab rejection of proposals which, had they been implemented, would have brought the Arabs closer to their objective, had only made Israel stronger. At every turn, Arab extremism and miscalculation had aided Zionist expansionism, while world opinion was repelled by the apparent Arab goal of annihilation.

Like most of the other participants, al-Jalabi demanded internal changes in the Arab world which would free the Arabs from their erstwhile dream of eliminating Israel militarily—a dream which had become a nightmare of self-delusion and damaging divisiveness. The burden fell on the Arab world to produce an acceptable "Substitute" and to be prepared to offer it to the enemy at the proper moment. In al-Jalabi's opinion, the Arab proposal would have to include offers of mutual "trust and closeness":

> "I have suggested waiting until an advanced stage [in the conflict] before presenting the Substitute, since the main condition is to find someone who would accept it. And is it possible now to find such a person in Israel? Likewise, it is necessary that the Israelis should have tangible indications in the Arab world which would prove that the Substitute is not merely an empty slogan, but rather the beginning of a development toward creating trust and closeness, in place of conflict and mutual estrangement. . . ."

THIS EMPHASIS on reconciliation and brotherly relations was pronounced in the symposium; it seemed sincere, in the sense that it was not aimed at luring Israel into a heedlessness which would make it more vulnerable to attack, or merely a cover for carrying the battle into the political sphere. Though both military threat and political struggle constituted parts of the preliminary stages of the "Substitute" being proposed, the overall aim was to transcend all that and create a true pacification. Once again, however, this could only come about with an Israeli willingness to relinquish the Zionist ethos and purpose, to become "a natural part of the area."

Hasan al-Dabbagh, who at that time was head of the Kuwaiti permanent delegation in Geneva, stated the overall aim clearly:

> "We must propose a Substitute which would be just, positive, in harmony with our future development and desires, and devoid of any propagandistic intentions. . . .
>
> Thus, the Substitute must state clearly that we are not against the Jews. We are only against the political thought that presently rules the Jewish State. We oppose this thought in South Africa and Rhodesia. So how should we not oppose it in Palestine? We must reach the human depth of the Israeli and thereby change him. If we could relieve him of his fears, we would be able to awaken his human feelings. . . ."

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For al-Dabbagh, too, "the Substitute" must mean a sincere attempt to achieve true peace with the Jews of Israel. Anti-Jewishness, which alienated the Western world, should be explicitly rejected; the struggle was against Zionist "politicai thought." The first halting steps toward change would result from Israeli territorial withdrawal, which would constitute an end to Israel's "expansionist nature." But the central problem, which was Israel's "racist nature", and its status as an "alien body" in the Middle East, would be altered only in time, through the means of persuasion and re-education.

THIS BRINGS US TO Egypt's "initiative" of 1977. The Arabic word "*al-mubadarah*", often used in Egypt to denote the late Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem and its diplomatic aftermath, has the connotation not only of "initiative" or "undertaking" but also of an endeavour that is precedent-breaking. Such an understanding of Egypt's policy is to be found also in Israel and the West, particularly in journalistic accounts.

This is not inaccurate. Egypt did something unique in the record of Arab-Israel relations. But though Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the ensuing events and achievements may be seen as something new, it is important to realise that the policy follows in a line of thinking that predates its implementation—and that the conception of peace here entailed differs greatly from what most people take to be its obvious meaning.

As if to underscore the point that Egypt's pursuit of peace with Israel has been based on a highly particular conception of the aim being sought, none other than Butros Ghali has played a crucial role both in the pre-1977 deliberations within the Egyptian government and in its post-1977 implementation. Other evidence abounds in the official style and tone adopted by Egypt in its negotiations and other relations with Israel. Since the peace agreements were signed, Israeli and other visitors to Egypt have often reported, after meetings with unnamed Egyptian politicians and intellectuals, that the Egyptian "conception of peace" is "totally different" from that of Israel and the West. There is an acknowledgment of Israel's existence as a reality, but not as a legitimate one in its present form. And, periodically, there appears an explicit Egyptian statement so revealing of basic philosophy as to leave no doubt.

One of the frankest such statements occurred in an address delivered by Dr Mustapha Khalil, Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister, to a group of Israeli academics (in Tel Aviv in December 1980):

". . . And we are proud of the fact that when the Jews were being persecuted everywhere else, they were never persecuted under the Islamic empire or in Egypt or in any of the Middle East countries in medieval times.

Now, since we are here speaking frankly and scientifically, I have to draw a very real distinction. The Jewish religion is, along with Christianity and Islam, one of the three great religions. But we differ with you fundamentally in regard to one concept. When we speak of the Jews, we never regard them as constituting a national entity through their religion. A Jew can be an Egyptian Jew, a German Jew, or a French Jew. And I am putting this to you as an idea fundamental to our outlook. We view faith and nationality as two completely separate things. . . .

Therefore, we always regard the Jewish religion as strictly a religion and not as the mark, the symbol, of a national entity. Of course, you in Israel and in the Zionist movement have a different point of view, but I am stating to you very honestly and very frankly the Egyptian position.

Consequently, in the process of making peace with Israel, we think of Israel as our neighbour, with whom we wish to have normal, peaceful, friendly relations, but we bear in mind that this Israel, which at present comprises Jews and Arabs, may well undergo changes altering the whole nature of its society—changes which alone the future will reveal.

Meanwhile, we know you are very attached to your own tradition, your own history, and are entitled to be proud, as every ancient people living in our region is bound to take pride in its history and its achievements.

We have always refrained from harking back to past disputes. Our temporary enmity which started in 1948 hopefully came to an end with President Sadat's initiative. Let us turn the page!

In Egypt we have lived—Moslems, Christians, and Jews—as one people undivided by religion. In our present political life we have no parties based on religious beliefs. Religion, we say, is a personal relation between man and his god. . . ." [5]

Here, speaking explicitly as a high official of the Egyptian government, Mustapha Khalil expresses the classical Arab and Islamic rejection of Zionism and Jewish nationhood, albeit in the moderate form espoused by the contributors to Butros Ghali's 1975 symposium and earlier moderate Arabs: sincere recognition of a Jewish religious and cultural community in Palestine, but equally sincere denial of legitimacy to Jewish nationhood and sovereignty.

Mustapha Khalil (again like the symposium contributors) praises the glories of the past, and places

[5] *News Views* (Jerusalem), 1 February, 1981, p. 19.

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the beginning of the period of "temporary enmity" in 1948 when Israel was founded. This is curious. One would have thought the "temporary enmity" had arisen from Israel's capture of Arab territories in June 1967—the formal prelude, after all, to the negotiated settlement between Egypt and Israel. But Khalil, like Cecil Hourani before him, seems to consider Zionism itself the cause of the breakdown. The enmity results from the very establishment of Jewish sovereignty rather than from a quarrel over the territorial extent of that sovereignty. If as Khalil says, Egypt's initiative was meant to dispel this enmity, then its aim must be designed to eliminate the source: Zionist ideology and Jewish sovereignty. The deeper meaning of this, as was clear in Hourani's case, is the return of the Jews to their historical status in the Islamic East. The Jews, Khalil says, are a religion and not a nation. The peace which Egypt offers them is the peace of "the Substitute."

But, one may ask, do not formal diplomatic relations and continuing direct negotiations at least indicate a *tacit* Egyptian recognition of the legitimacy of Jewish nationhood? It is true that the new organisation of relations between the two states does connote, in accepted international understanding, some basic mutual recognition of sovereignty; this is even written into the Camp David agreements. But in Egyptian thinking, as in the thinking of moderate Arabs in general, this seems to occupy the status of a necessary initial formality, devoid of intrinsic political significance, and merely a foundation for certain later developments.

THE TRADITION OF ARAB MODERATION *vis-à-vis* Israel carries the fervent expectation that Israeli Jews will one day willingly accept their own dissolution as a nation-state (the only other possibility being continuous conflict). So confident do moderate Arabs seem to be of this eventuality that they speak little of how the transformation is to be effected. In part, their feeling of confidence seems to arise from a cool assessment of the constellation of international as well as regional factors coming into play in support of Arab and Palestinian demands for territorial adjustments—demands whose fulfilment would lay the initial material foundation for movement toward a full solution.

A complete Israeli withdrawal from the disputed territories of 1967, and the creation of a Palestinian Arab state under the PLO, could, in the estimation of these moderates, be realistically achieved. And in fact a considerable distance has already been travelled along this road. The international political community has recognised Arab claims; and Israel too has moved closer to meeting them, both on account of international insistence and on account of certain internal constraints, particularly economic ones. Though Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian statehood have not yet been implemented fully, one may easily believe that they are realistic prospects.

But what is the basis for a belief in the final stage of settlement—Israel's relinquishment of sovereignty? In light of the continuing strong trend of nationalism among Israeli Jews and their almost universal dedication to Jewish statehood, such an expectation would seem to be irrational. How, then, may one understand its central position in the thought of these people?

FOR AN ANSWER we must turn again to the larger themes of pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, both political trends deriving from the bitter reaction to Western domination. These movements, separate for a time, then coalescing into one, have striven to regain the rightful world-historical role of the Arabs and Islam. Palestine and its problems figure prominently in this programme. The Zionist "take-over" of Palestine symbolises the total failure of Arab Muslims to progress to independence and prominence in the modern world. Yet that failure, the Arabs believe, is destined to be overcome, and to be transformed into success.

For the moderate Arabs, as for all Arabs and Muslims, the ultimate disappearance of Zionism is, therefore, not merely a mundane political goal to be achieved through hard practical effort; it is, rather, something that is woven into the very fabric of history, something fated to occur. All that is required of Israeli Jews is that they accept their true status in the grand scheme. All that is required is the correct choice, a choice in keeping with their character as a minority religion. In this way the hope for the future will intersect with the dream of the past, where, in Khalil's words, ". . . we have lived—Moslems, Christians, and Jews—as one people undivided by religion."

Egypt's courage in violating the traditional pattern of Arab extremism is the most conclusive proof of its sincerity. Arab and Muslim unity in the struggle to eliminate Israel through violence has been a central element in contemporary Arab nationalist doctrine. To violate that principle, in isolation, as Egypt has done, is to strain the already fragile bonds among parties whose unity has often been more a fervent desire than a fact. The expected penalty for such infringement has not been long in coming, taking the form of a political and cultural estrangement felt deeply on both sides of the divide.

SINCE THE ASSASSINATION last October of President Sadat, many commentators have asked whether there will be a continuation of the policy of

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peace.[6] This question reflects the assumption that Sadat was the main architect of the policy as well as the one who achieved its realisation. Though understandable, such an assumption is not completely to the point. For as the above analysis attempts to show, it was a group of important Egyptian (and some non-Egyptian Arab) political intellectuals who dared to conceive and develop the visionary conception of true peace between the Arabs and Israel; a conception based on the earlier Arab ideological trend of moderation toward Israel, but pushed here to the limits of what might one day be acceptable to contemporary Arab nationalist doctrine. In this sense, Butros Chali was even more important than Sadat.

A better question is, will Sadat's circle of colleagues who shared the vision of peace and based their policy on it be able in the short run to succeed Sadat and maintain an orderly rule? And if so, will they be able in the long run to resist the inevitable pressure against peace from the various powerful Islamic and other anti-government movements which have in recent years begun to be so prominent in Egypt? Though often using the peace with Israel as a focus of their various dissatisfactions, these movements express more general and more basic concerns about the Arab Muslim identity and future in the modern world—concerns which probably reflect substantial popular sentiment in most contemporary Arab and Muslim countries.

Whatever the challenges, one may know that under a régime of the old circle or any of its later disciples, whether led by Husni Mubarak or someone else, Egypt will certainly attempt to continue in its vision of peace—a vision which these men sincerely believe will one day gain acceptance as the best way to achieve an all-Arab goal: the elimination of Zionism. So long as its efforts seem to be bearing demonstrable fruit, Egypt will push ahead, hoping that the more luxurious these fruits prove to be, the greater will be the temptation of fellow-Arabs to share in the plucking. For the Egyptians, this would herald the beginning of true Arab unity. King Abdullah, Cecil Hourani, and many Arab intellectuals, among others, would heartily approve.

[6] See, in ENCOUNTER, "Sadat's Last Interview" (January 1982).

Construct

Racks of shiny spanners in the shops, echoing shapes
Sequential like organ pipes;
Bright oily barbed wire in coils,
Bristling wire on silvery spools, silk-spun;
Silver echoes of metals as a rose is echoes of petals;

The spiderweb echoing in the garden
As a stone dropped in a pool echoes from its rim,
The lichened pebble hung there at the exact centre.

The web flexes and glitters like a mirror one may pass through
If one is the right size; I disturb this templum
Of crossed strings by tapping with a grass-head;

The big spinster runs round
And round inside her flossy shirt,
Her big garment that is empty,
That hangs like a masterpiece of explicit death
In the brilliant green galleries.
Her legs are fastened to her head.

The tiny husband once the proprietor
Travelling at an escape velocity down a thread,
His glassy exit like a fireman's pole
That sways and springs from his recoiling loins.

Peter Redgrove

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Murder in the (Warsaw) Cathedral

THE CATHEDRAL *of St John's in Warsaw was more than full, and it was soon clear that the play which had had its première in 1935 was now replete with the most topical references to the current Polish situation. The villains smash their way into the cathedral, swinging their axes. The Archbishop of Canterbury is done away with. . . .*

In the audience, watching the Warsaw performance of T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral *was the Catholic primate, Archbishop Jozef Glemp. And from the pulpit which he uses to speak to the faithful, a Polish actor named Gustav Holoubek spoke the words of the famous declaration of faith which earned Thomas à Becket his sainthood. It was the same Holoubek who just recently resigned from his seat in the Polish parliament, a widely acclaimed protest against the declaration of martial law. Not far from his place in the pulpit there is a Banner, carrying the message:* "Blessed Maximilian Kolbe, protect Our Youth!" *(Kolbe was the Polish priest who during World War II in the Auschwitz concentration camp volunteered to take the place of a prisoner, a family man, on the death list.) The dramatic events unfold in the cathedral to almost complete silence, broken only by the scoffing laughter which mocked the murderous knights when they tried to justify their crime.*

The words which earned the audience's scorn came from one of Eliot's knights who presented himself as a recognised authority in constitutional matters:

"Had Becket concurred with the King's wishes, we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government. . . .

It is only with the measures that we have had to adopt, in order to set matters to rights, that you take issue. No one regrets the necessity for violence more than we do. Unhappily, there are times when violence is the only way in which social justice can be secured. . . .

We have served your interests; we merit your applause; and if there is any guilt in the matter, you must share it with us."

Murder in the Cathedral (1935), pp. 80–81

AT THE CONCLUSION *of the play one of the villains in the piece asks the audience to leave for their homes quietly and peacefully, even if outraged by the death of a hero:*

". . . He used every means of provocation. . . . This man, formerly a great public servant, had become a wrecker." (p. 82)

One theatre critic with no text to consult actually took the next lines to be a special addition, inserted presumably in order to help General Jaruzelski maintain "law and order":

". . . I suggest that you now disperse quietly to your homes. Please be careful not to loiter in groups on street corners, and do nothing that might provoke any public outbreak." (p. 83)

As if it were feasible! Outside St John's Cathedral was the reality of which (in Eliot's famous phrase) "Mankind cannot bear very much": a "Black Maria" with the General's militia was on patrol; and the theatre-goers did their best to rush homewards in order to make it before the 23:00 nightly curfew.

I have smelt them, the death-bringers; now it is too late
For action, too soon for contrition.
Nothing is possible but the shamed swoon
Of those consenting to the last humiliation. (p. 66)

T. S. ELIOT'S Murder in the Cathedral *was performed by the ensemble of the "Dramatic Theatre" which usually plays in the auditorium of the Culture Palace, donated in the 1950s by the Russian authorities in the familiar wedding-cake style of Soviet architecture. According to the actors, when the decision was made to play T. S. Eliot in the cathedral, following on from the evening mass, there wasn't a ticket anywhere to be had. They hope to be able to put on another performance. Perhaps the official Polish news agency PAP was trying to be helpful by summing up the 12th-century events as being "a conflict between the temporal and the spiritual powers over the freedom of the Catholic Church."*

We know of oppression and torture,
We know of extortion and violence,
Destitution and disease,
The old without fire in winter,
The child without milk in summer,
Our labour taken away from us,
Our sins made heavier upon us. . . .

God gave us always some reason, some hope,
but now a new terror has soiled us, which
none can avert, non can avoid. . . . (pp. 42–3)

F.A.Z.

News Item:

POLAND'S military authorities reimposed overnight curfews and martial-law restrictions in several cities, including Warsaw, yesterday [4 May] after a day of nationwide violence in which 1,372 people were arrested and 72 policemen reported injured.

Worshippers were trapped when police cordoned churches to keep people off the streets, and Father Henryk Jankowski, who is priest to Lech Walesa the *Solidarity* leader, appeared at the door of his church and asked police to "respect this holy place."

Robin Gedye

DAILY TELEGRAPH *(London)*

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LETTERS

Last Words about "Yalta"

I SUSPECT the moment will shortly come, if it has not come already, when you will say "this correspondence must now cease!" But you may perhaps expect me to make a final effort to justify my general attitude as against that of Leopold Labedz (ENCOUNTER, May).

Always supposing, then, that we had, before the final defeat of the Nazis, treated the Soviet Government in the way which he would presumably have treated them if *he* had been in the place of Roosevelt or Churchill what would have happened? There would, I suppose, have been no agreement on the German zones; no effort to plan what would happen when the armies met; no agreement on the sort of World Organisation which should, in the current opinion of nearly everybody, follow the horrors of World War II, The Russians would, no doubt, simply have been told that we expected them to get back to Russia when the War was over and that if they did not evacuate the "liberated" countries and allow genuinely democratic régimes to be established there, so much the worse for them.

Apart from the fact that such a policy would have been quite impossible to operate, in the sense that neither government could have stood up to the storm of public indignation which it would have engendered, it would only have been logically consistent with an intention to make a separate peace with the Nazis, or some of them, as soon as this was practicable and join hands with the retreating German Army in an effort to achieve the presumed objective, if necessary by military means. This, indeed, was what Stalin probably thought was the "Imperialists' " secret intention; and, no doubt, given his Communist creed, it must have seemed to him to be logical. Even Hitler, I believe, thought it was possible. Certainly Goebbels did. The Western Allies, however, had, for obvious reasons, no such intention and they naturally wanted to convince their suspicious ally that this was so. Were they wrong in so doing? Surely not.

But, if so, then they had to assume that, however unlikely, it *might* be possible to persuade the Russians to act in a reasonably civilised way in the countries which they would inevitably occupy as a result of the defeat of the Nazis and from which they clearly could not be evicted except by our going to war together with what remained of the German Army. Certainly it very soon became apparent that this policy was doomed; but what does Leopold Labedz think we could have done to frustrate Soviet policy over and above what we then *did* do—namely, after strong protests, to form a separate state out of our three Zones and, eventually to establish a defensive alliance?

I SUPPOSE we might have at once formed the United Nations without the USSR; but that would not have affected the world balance of power very much. Certainly we might have stayed where we were when the War ended and not retreated to our Zones, using the violation of the Declaration of Liberated Europe as a good excuse. (Churchill wanted to do this, but was restrained by the Americans.) But I fail to see how we could otherwise "with more foresight have made a difference to the outcome."

As for what I myself may have said immediately after Yalta, I would like to verify the context since I have no records of my own and my memory is defective. It may be that for tactical reasons at that particular moment it seemed better to act as suggested. But certainly I do not regret saying (in May 44) that "there was no reason to despair of an amicable arrangement with the Bolsheviks." The effort to arrive at such an arrangement simply had to be made.

OF COURSE I can admit—and I hope that this will appease Professor Labedz—that those who influenced events in any way in 1945 (including myself) were too optimistic regarding the possibility of coming to some long-term agreement with the Kremlin. On the other hand, what it came down to in practice was simply the possibility of making the best of a *fait accompli* resulting from the fact that we had had to rely on the (admittedly splendid) efforts of the Russians in order to defeat the Nazis. However unfortunate the results of the last War this was better, for us at least, than the Nazi death camps and the salt mines.

So I continue to maintain, with Raymond Aron, that it was not diplomacy, but the movement of armies that resulted in the division of Europe and that the blame for such division should be laid on Stalin rather than on "Yalta." And I am also—quite consistently—in favour of a common "Western" policy designed, by peaceful means, to get the Russians back into Russia. Until this happens, tension will always be with us and our security—as is becoming increasingly clear—will depend on our ability to demonstrate that we are able, by non-nuclear means, to prevent Soviet domination of the Western half of our small continent and, thus, in all likelihood of the world.

GLADWYN

House of Lords
London

LORD GLADWYN IS still, I am afraid, defending the indefensible. He tries somehow to explain away the inconsistency of holding simultaneously pro-Yalta and anti-*détente* views.

He admits that the Yalta policy was "too optimistic", but argues that the illusions were harmless or even useful. He completely disregards the point of my criticism stressing that the Yalta conference was a culmination of the whole "Yalta policy" which was going on since 1941. Instead, Lord Gladwyn deals only with the situation "before the final defeat of the Nazis"; and thus, taking the conference out of its whole politico-historical context, he states the obvious:

> "It was not diplomacy, but the movement of armies that resulted in the division of Europe. . . ."

Who in his senses would ever object to such a self-evident proposition?

Those who try to justify Munich or Yalta always narrow down the issue by arguing that there was no alternative at the time. But what about the policy which led to such a dead-end situation in the first place?

Take Munich. Like Yalta it consummated the earlier policy of concessions which started when, on 7 March 1936, Hitler marched into the Rhineland. On the same

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day, Foreign Secretary Eden counselled the French not to take any action, and Prime Minister Baldwin declared that "the action they proposed would not only result in letting loose another great war in Europe. They might succeed in smashing Germany, with the aid of Russia, but it would probably result in Germany going Bolshevik. . . ."[1]

Anthony Eden (who, contrary to widespread myth, did not resign from the Chamberlain government on the issue of appeasement) pursued a similar policy of concessions to Stalin from the moment of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. It is ironical that at the moment when Baldwin's self-fulfilling prophecy was on the verge of partial implementation, Lord Gladwyn did not see any alternative to the appeasement of Stalin, other than collaboration with Hitler.

False alternatives, presenting one or two unacceptable options as absolutely the only available choices, are a *specialité de la maison* of all those who prefer concessions to resistance: Baldwin and Herriot, Chamberlain and Bonnet, Roosevelt and Eden. That the choices were indeed difficult does not alter the fact that in each case the attitude underlying the respective policies was one of appeasement. Lord Gladwyn presumably rejects as false the proposition, widely fostered not long ago, that *détente à la* Brezhnev is the only alternative to war, but believes that shifting to the Third Reich was the only alternative to Yalta.

It is, of course, obvious that once the Soviet armies were on the Elbe there was no way "to persuade the Russians to act in a reasonably civilised way." Stalin was a tyrant who said (to Djilas) that whoever occupies a country imposes his own political system on it. And his system was not civilised. To believe that he could have been induced to an "amicable arrangement" on that particular score was quite unrealistic. Lord Gladwyn appreciates now the harsh outcome of the policy of appeasing Stalin, yet he still maintains that it was the only possible policy, that "the effort to arrive at such an arrangement had to be made." But why if the effort was not only vain, but also noxious?

IF I HAD BEEN "in the place of Roosevelt or Churchill", I would have at least recognised that such an exercise was utterly futile, that in view of Stalin's character and the nature of the Soviet system, one could realistically expect positive responses only to competitive moves and effective pressures and not to "amicable" concessions, expecting reciprocity, as Roosevelt did, on the principle of *noblesse oblige*. Nor would I have entertained any such naive notions (which Lord Gladwyn still parades), as trying to allay Stalin's suspicions by one-sided displays of good will. "Surely not."

I would not have been ready to sacrifice political advantages by chasing a chimera of the radiant future of "Peace and Cooperation"[2] under the dazzling Wilsonian perspective of a new United Nations Organisation, a project of astronomic innocence which Roosevelt foolishly placed at the top of his world-political priorities (and Lord Gladwyn is apparently still proud of having persuaded the Russians to accept it). I would have at least taken as a warning the unedifying experience of the League of Nations and . . . of Stalin's Great Purge (after all, the chief prosecutor in the Moscow Trials, the unspeakable Andrei Vyshinsky, became the first Soviet delegate at the UN).

The effectiveness of the United Nations in dealing with aggression has been demonstrated *inter alia* in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Viet Nam and Afghanistan. Perhaps the current Falkland story is underlining the experience. Contrary to Lord Gladwyn's view, the balance of power was negatively affected after the War, particularly in respect of long-term Western interests, by the creation of the United Nations Organisation. It only inhibits Western powers from acting in accordance with their own values and necessities, encourages irresponsible behaviour by a host of new nations, and in general aggravates global problems rather than contributing to their solution. The obligatory kow-towing to this institutional humbug with a built-in majority of dictatorial countries prevents free countries from realistically pursuing policies which would defend their interests and ensure their survival. No, the birth of this particular "sacred cow" was not really worth the noble Lord's obstetric efforts. . . .

He still thinks that in practice there was nothing else to do during the War but to make "the best of a *fait accompli* resulting from the fact that we had to rely on the (admittedly splendid) efforts of the Russians in order to defeat the Nazis. . . ." Nothing else at all? What about some proposed *faits accomplis* of our own? Churchill not only wanted to stay "where we were when the War ended", but also favoured earlier the Balkan invasion of Europe's "soft underbelly", a strategy which might have prevented the Soviet armies reaching the heart of the Continent. He was overruled by Roosevelt. This is one instance where more foresight could have made an im-

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[1] Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin, A Biography* (London, 1969), p. 918.

[2] Roosevelt expressed his ideas on the subject many times, and particularly succinctly in his speech to the Foreign Policy Association (21 October 1944):

> "I think the Russians are perfectly friendly; they are not trying to gobble up all the rest of Europe or the world. They did not know us, that's the really important difference . . . and now that they have gotten to know us they are much more willing to accept us."

Roosevelt's views were echoed by Harry Hopkins:

> "The Russians undoubtedly like the American people. They like the United States. They trust the United States more than they trust any power in the world. I believe they not only have no wish to fight with us, but are determined to take their place in world affairs in an international organization, and above all, they want to maintain friendly relations with us."

There was only one disturbing thought in these confident reflections by Hopkins:

> "The Russians had proved that they could be reasonable and farseeing and there was not any doubt in the minds of the President or any of us that we could live with them and get along with them peacefully for as far into the future as any of us could imagine. But I have to make one amendment to that—I think we all had in our minds the reservation that we could not foretell what the results would be if anything should happen to Stalin. We felt sure that we could count on him to be reasonable and sensible and understanding—but we never could be sure who or what might be in back of him there in the Kremlin."
>
> (Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* [New York, 1948], pp. 870 & 922)

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portant difference to the outcome.

It was not fortuitous that such strategic decisions had little or no chance in the political climate of the "Yalta policy." Keeping this context in mind (and with the additional time perspective), one simply cannot assert that the illusions of this policy played no significant role in the unfolding political tragedy, that it was all predetermined.

In historical perspective it should be clear that the "Yalta policy", embodied in the Crimean conference of 1945, was essentially a policy of capitulating to Stalin's demands, however reluctantly, and of legitimising this practice by a veneer of democratic phraseology of which the hypocritical "Declaration on Liberated Europe" was a striking example. It should not have been taken at face value then, and it should certainly not be so taken now, by anybody who knows anything about the nature and character of Soviet policy. Western politicians, diplomats, and the public expected that the "Yalta policy" would bring about cooperation in the post-War world and lead to a stable world peace under the UN umbrella. Few realised at the time that it would not produce anything of the sort. But now, at least, it should be clear that the "writing-off" of Eastern Europe by Stalin's Western allies did not assuage Soviet appetites but only whetted them still more. In historical perspective the Yalta conference was a stage in Soviet imperial expansion which led to the extension of Soviet influence on a global scale.

Lord Gladwyn's arguments are really an attempt to square a circle. If he admits, as he does, that "Yalta policy" was "too optimistic", then all the other criticisms of this policy logically follow, because the over-optimistic assumption which formed its premise was that Stalin could have been satisfied—or reassured, or "appeased"—by concessions, and that was pure illusion. Lord Gladwyn's "curious inconsistency" is thus revealed not only in the contrast between his attitude to the Yalta and *détente* policies, but also in the fact that although he now reluctantly agrees that the premise of the "Yalta policy" was clearly wrong, he continues to justify it as necessary. This is regrettable.

LEOPOLD LABEDZ

London

Remembering Trotsky

IN HER MEMOIR of Trotsky in Mexico, published posthumously and for the first time in English in ENCOUNTER (April), Alice Rühle-Gerstel makes this observation:

> "Then slowly the people began to arrive: Dwight Macdonald with the Eisner girl [a painter and niece of Kurt Eisner, the Bavarian socialist leader, murdered in 1919]. . . ."

Near the end of the piece, she also mentions a "Ruth Eisner, who came to help with the Commission."

If, as I presume likely, this text is intended to represent me, I should like to enter a correction: three, in fact.

It is true that I was in Mexico, at Coyoacan, on the occasion of the John Dewey Commission's counter-trial to the "Moscow Trials"; and that I am a painter by profession. I was not, however, engaged in any way in the proceedings. I took it upon myself to do a painting of the *Hearings* in session, which is now in the collection of The Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University; and two portraits of Trotsky in his study, one of which is now in a collection at Harvard.

I went there not with Dwight Macdonald (as Rühle-Gerstel states), but with my husband John McDonald. He went there along with Herbert Solow, Charles and Adelaide Walker (Mrs George, mentioned for the reception she gave for Trotsky and Dewey & Co. after the *Hearings*, is Adelaide's mother), James and Hortense Farrell, and others, to assist both groups, the Dewey Commission and Trotsky's staff, in the making and carrying out of arrangements for the *Hearings*. Thus, structurally speaking, they formed the third of the three groups present for the occasion.

I don't know who "Ruth Eisner" could be, though I could well have said something in the spirit of what that supposed person is quoted as saying in support of Rühle-Gerstel's own personal impressions of Trotsky. I did find him elegant, gracious, interested in the people around him, and concerned with the smallest details of one's life and work. He would discreetly peek around at my painting and make rather perceptive remarks. He once said, "Just remember that I can never get a hat to fit my head." And about the painting of many heads in the *Hearings*, he attributed to Diego Rivera in Trotsky-like language the observation: "The coefficient of caricature is not equal." Quite true. Altogether a lovely man, surprising in view of his role in history.

As for my being a niece of Kurt Eisner, not so, though there was a legend in my family that we were distantly related. My Eisner great-grandparents and both grandfathers left Vienna in the period 1869–72 to settle respectively in New York, Philadelphia, and San Antonio. There have been quite a few Eisners, though not so many as the sons of Donald.

DOROTHY EISNER MCDONALD

New York City

THERE is a reference to me on p.34 of Alice Rühle-Gerstel's 1937 Mexican diary about Trotsky in your April issue. The fact is I'm one of the few activists on the Trotsky Defense Committee who *didn't* go to Mexico for the Dewey hearings. (I've been kicking myself ever since—something must have seemed more important at the time, God knows what—but that's the unhappy fact.) Therefore I hope you'll believe me when I disclaim all knowledge, guilty or innocent, of "the Eisner girl." My wife does.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

New York City

Publisher's Note

As on occasion in the past, we are publishing a combined summer issue of ENCOUNTER. This enlarged June-July number will be listed in the Index under Vol. LVIX. The August issue will be published as usual on 20 July.

ENCOUNTER acknowledges financial assistance from, among other generous donors, the Arts Council of Great Britain.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WATMOUGHS LIMITED, IDLE, BRADFORD; AND LONDON

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Life & Letters Today

London

FALSE ANALOGY: **Is traffic congestion really the ultimate disaster? The headline in last week's *Sunday Times*—"Is London Choking to Death?"—was based on a false analogy between the city and the human body [Ferdinand Mount writes].**

Cities die from a *surfeit* of oxygen. It's empty spaces that kill them off—derelict wasteland, *unpeopled pavements, shops to let, old lanes torn* down to make space for urban motorways. The Liverpool docks yearn for a little of London's congestion.

THE STANDARD

Vicenza

ORWELLIAN UPLIFT: *Brig. Gen. James L. Dozier spent his 42 days of captivity in the hands of Red Brigades terrorists constantly chained to a steel cot in a pup tent under the never-extinguished glare of an electric bulb.*

In addition to an Italian-English dictionary, the terrorists occasionally brought him books in English. At the time of his rescue, the General said, he was reading "1984."

"I don't recommend that people read that when they're in jail," the General said of George Orwell's classic vision of totalitarianism. "It's not the most uplifting thing you can read."

NEW YORK TIMES

Washington DC

SIX-SYLLABLE TROUBLE: Democratic Chairman Manatt says his party has been "outconceptualized" by the Republicans.

WALL STREET JOURNAL

London

STARTERS: An Italian will preface his main remarks with *allora* (then, or so), or (even more universal) *dunque* ("well then" or "to come to the point"), with the first syllable drawn out to affected length. "*Ecoutez*" says the reporter on French radio, as though his audience wasn't doing just that anyway. Are these not merely mannerisms but apparently essential self-starters, without which the engine would fail to function?

Many years of living in France taught me [Frank Giles writes] the true and terrible meaning behind another introductory word. When in the course of a banquet or other public occasion of speech making, the orator, other who may well have been on his feet already for 20 minutes or more, seems to be approaching the culmination and says *bref*, you can be pretty sure that there is at least another quarter-of-an-hour to come.

SUNDAY TIMES

London

JC: While Michael Foot incurs the wrath of the nation for his sloppy dress, former Prime Minister "Sunny" Jim Callaghan still makes a sartorial effort. Callaghan, 68, turned up at an exhibition of paintings the other night in a dapper dark blue suit with his initials delicately forming the pin stripe. He even drew admiring glances from the Duchess of Gloucester.

Although some consider personalised suits the last word in vulgarity, Jim is rather fond of the outfit, which he had made after buying the cloth from a firm in Kirkburton, Huddersfield. He was so pleased that he bought some more as a gift for ex-U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who shares the same initials.

DAILY MAIL

Bonn

IN A NAME: *What's in a name (as the poet asks), and especially if it's one's own and unrecognisable? The answer is: Chinese syllables.*

On a recent visit to China the Swiss playwright Friedrich Duerrenmatt had to reconcile himself to the fact that his plays were written by one "Fulidelixi Dulunmate." Evidently the Chinese spoken language has to make do with only some 400 phonetic sounds, and consequently all names of foreigners have to be squeezed into these tones and more often than not they don't quite fit, not at least to the shape of the Western ear. German statesmen like Helmut Schmidt and Franz Josef Strauss, both still patiently pro-Chinese in their diplomatic orientation, are called "Shimite" and "Shitelaosi" respectively.

DIE WELT

Deal, Kent

RENDER UNTO CAESAR: *William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania, sailed from Deal in Kent in August, 1682, and the Americans want to put up a commemorative plaque on the seafront. Some of the townsfolk feel, however, that the foreshore is going to get too cluttered: they already have one monument marking the landing there of Julius Caesar in 55 BC.*

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Boston

EXCESS: **In a memorandum sent by the Boston School Dept to 1,075 teachers, it says:**

"Review of probable organization of your school/department for 81/82 school year has determined that at present time you are excessed in your current assignment."

"Excessed." It's Boston School Department bureaucratese for reassigned.

The word is not as traumatic as "terminated", laid off, but it is almost as bad.

BOSTON GLOBE

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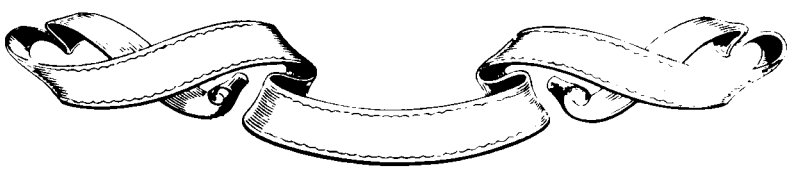

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